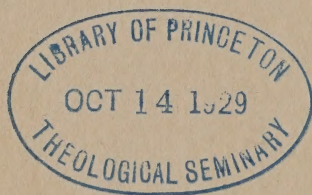


# Student's Compendium

DR. HENRY BEETS



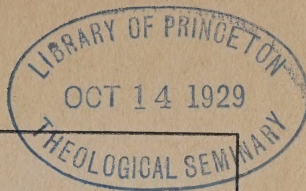
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Students' compendium of the  
Heidelberg catechism











# Students' Compendium

*of the* Heidelberg  
**CATECHISM**

BY

✓  
REV. HENRY BEETS, LL. D.



Second Edition, Revised

WM. B. EERDMANS PUBLISHING CO.

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## PREFACE

**T**HIS book has been written at the request of its publisher who had felt the need of a simpler and smaller book for the scholars of our Bible classes, since our *Compendium Explained* has grown into what may be called a commentary on the Compendium of the Heidelberg Catechism, for older people and for teachers of Bible classes.

Its first edition, dated May, 1925, followed quite closely the wording of the *Compendium Enlarged*, of the late Rev. M. J. Bosma, and the present writer. But with the exception of the insertion of a large number of proof-texts. Much new material had likewise been added, for a part of which we were indebted to the Rev. J. M. Ghysels, who placed at our disposal Notes he had written while preparing lessons on our *Compendium Explained*, for the use of the Bible classes of our churches in Holland, Michigan. Some use had been made of the little book of the Rev. J. H. Landwehr on the Compendium, while many definitions had been taken from the Westminster Shorter Catechism, because of their remarkable briefness, combined with clearness and completeness. The book avoided polemics, except in cases named or inferred in the *Compendium*. Our *Compendium Explained* was referred to for combatting divergent views. We deemed a positive, thetical presentation of what the Reformed Churches hold, to be sufficient to serve the purpose of this book. The second edition has been amended here and there, as time and recent events in our circles suggested them. References to missions, found in the first edition have, of course, been retained.

Our *Reformed Confession Explained* will prove to be helpful in studying the details of various points not touched upon in the *Compendium Explained*, hence our reference to that new book at different places.



It is hoped that this volume will not alone be useful to its students while they attend catechism classes, but throughout their life, particularly enabling them to follow with the more interest and benefit the preaching on the Heidelberg Catechism required in our churches. The comparative table at the end of the book will help in this respect, as well as the index.

We commend this work to the gracious care of the Chief Shepherd of his sheep and lambs, as well as to the kindly reception of his under-shepherds of Reformed Christendom, wherever a book like this, in the English tongue, can be useful. May it not alone be used graciously that our young people, from generation to generation, come to know and love the triune God of salvation, but also to serve Him, to the coming of His Kingdom, in them, around them, and through them, at home and abroad.

HENRY BEETS.

Grand Rapids, Mich.  
July 3, 1929.

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## CHAPTER I.

## INTRODUCTORY: THE TWO FACTORS IN RELIGION. SOURCES OF ITS KNOWLEDGE. GENERAL AND SPECIAL REVELATION. BIBLE. CREEDS.

RELIGION may be defined briefly as the bond that unites or is claimed to unite, God and man. Now it is very evident that the last named factor in religion, MAN, really exists. Man is the *subject* of religion, i.e., the one who exercises it, in worshipping the object of religion, GOD. Man exists as a *personal* being, able to say: "I know," "I feel," "I will." That means that he is a personality, conscious of his existence, and endowed with mind, emotions, and will. Surely, it is sheer foolishness to deny or even to call in question that *man* exists. We also know that man, ever since the world stood, has believed in some kind of a Supreme Being, and tried to worship him.

But how do we know that there is, indeed, a Being whom we may call the *object* of our worship, and who is worthy of it, in other words, who is God? Are we as sure of it that *He* exists as we are certain of it that *we* have being? And we reply: indeed, we have good arguments to prove that, even apart from what will be said later on in this chapter about revelation.

The first argument is that of a *First Cause*. We, and the world of which we are a part, must have a Cause, like every effect has that. And the Being back of all that we call world, or universe, must of necessity be an exalted, powerful Being, in other words, God Almighty. This argument is called the cosmological one, from "*cosmos*" meaning world.

The second argument reasons from the *order* and *design* manifest in ourselves and the world, to a Designer, and that One a very intelligent Maker as well as exalted and powerful. In other words, God. This argument is called the teleological, signifying design, or purpose (from the Greek word *telos*=end). The marvelous construction of the human eye and ear may well serve as an illustration of this argument.

The third argument is named the *moral* argument. The fact that all men have a conscience, with its distinction between right and wrong, with its demands of what we ought and ought not to do, leads us to conclude to the existence of a Lawgiver, who implanted this conscience in us, and who has an inherent right to command us—God.

A fourth argument is that of *congruity*, or fitness. We know that we have a good key, when it *fits* in the lock of the door we want to open. The belief in a Supreme Being, an exalted, powerful, wise and righteous Cause of all things, explains the world and all that exists in such a way as it cannot possibly be explained by Atheism, which denies that there is such a Supreme Being. (For these, and other arguments, see our *Compendium Explained*, Chapter VIII.)

What that Being is, is made known to us in details through revelation. That has also informed us of the nature of acceptable *religion*, which may be defined as “the proper belief in and service of the true God.” It includes that we know God with our mind, love him with our heart, and willingly serve him with our life.

The *revelation* just referred to can be divided into two kinds, called *general* and *special* revelation. Both are mentioned in Article II of the Belgic Confession of Faith under the heading: “*By what means God is made known unto us.*” We are told: “We know him by two means.” And it names as the first one, that of *general* revelation: “the creation, preservation, and government of the universe, which is before us as a most elegant book, wherein all creatures, great and small, are as so many characters leading us to contemplate the invisible things of God, namely: ‘His eternal power and Godhead,’ as the apostle Paul saith, Rom. 1:21; ‘all which things are sufficient to convince men, and leave them without excuse.’” In so far as this knowledge of God is “born in us,” we call it “innate,” and in so far as obtained through study, we term it “acquired.” And note that our Creed mentions three things as belonging to this first “means” to know God. It is not alone creation, but also preservation and government. What a world of meaning in these three matters!

Let us meditate on them. History also helps us to acquire this knowledge, and the promptings of conscience, our own experiences of life, and even science and art.

But this "general revelation" is not sufficient for us to enable us to *properly* know, love, and serve the true God. To be sure, we ought to value it, for it teaches us not alone God's existence, but also His power, wisdom, and goodness. Rom. 1:20; Acts 17:27-28. When "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament His handiwork," Ps. 19:1, we should observe this, and admire their Maker. Moreover:

"Not in the World of Light alone  
Where God has built His blazing throne,  
Nor yet alone on earth below,  
With belted seas that some and go,  
And endless isles of sunlit green  
Is all thy Maker's glory seen—  
Look in upon thy wondrous frame,  
Eternal Wisdom still the same."

But all of this glorious general revelation is not sufficient for us fallen creatures to become acquainted with God and be at peace, Job 22:21. Everywhere we may be able to trace the footsteps of our Creator, but we need to know more of our Sovereign and Maker. Even the most enlightened pagans, like Plato, show this in erroneous teachings and faulty lives. And the pagan religions show devolution far more than evolution. Even though it is true what Calvin stated, "that the human mind, even by natural instinct, possesses some sense of Deity," and, "that the seeds of religion are sown by God in every heart," (*Institutes*, Book I, Chaps. 3 and 4), general revelation does not *suffice* us, no matter what is revealed "by the creation, preservation and government of the universe."

God sovereignly and mercifully gave what is called "*special revelation*." Under the heading, "Of the Written Word of God," Art. III, the Confession states: "We confess that this word of God was not sent, nor delivered by the will of man, but that holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, as the apostle Peter saith. And that afterwards God, from a special care, which he has for us and our salvation, commanded his servants, the



prophets and apostles, to commit his revealed word to writing; and He, himself, wrote with his own finger, the two tables of the law. Therefore, we call such writings holy and divine Scriptures."

While these writings are designed primarily to teach religion to us, this does not mean, as some hold in our days, that they are not trustworthy in their statements about science and history. God did not put an inerrant revelation about religion in a book full of scientific errors and crudities and unreliable accounts of history!

The process by which writers of Bible books were enabled to give us the Word of God, is called *inspiration*, by which we understand that the Holy Spirit, the primary author, so moved, instructed, and directed the authors of the Scriptures as to write infallibly the Word of God. 2 Tim. 3:16: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God." The Lord in his providence prepared the writers of the Bible for, and called them to the work; He illumined their minds as to things already known that they might rightly understand "the things of God," 1 Cor. 2:14; He revealed what was unknown, discovering the "deep things of God," Rom. 11:33, 34, and directed them while writing, to infallibly express what God wanted them to record as his Word, 2 Peter 1:21: "For no prophecy ever came by the will of men, but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit." (Compare *Reformed Confession Explained*, Chapter III, §2, on Inspiration.)

Protestants hold that these "holy and divine Scriptures" are the 39 books of the Old and the 27 of the New Testament. Can you name them? These are called "*canonical*," from the word "canon" or rule, that is, they are to be the rule for the believer's faith and life. They are called canonical also to distinguish them from the so-called *apocryphal* or "hidden" books, circulating among the Jews of old. The chief ones are 1 and 2 Esdras, Tobit, Judith, the Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, the Song of the three children, the history of Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, the Prayer of Manasses, and 1, 2, 3, and 4 "books of the Maccabees." Roman Catholics acknowledge them as inspired and authoritative, but Protestants do not, even

as the Jewish Church, to which the oracles of God were entrusted, Rom. 3:2; never acknowledged these books as of equal value and authority as the others, from Genesis to Malachi. (Compare *Reformed Confession Explained*, Chapter VI.)

These 66 canonical Bible books were written by some 35 different authors, during a period of some 1700 years, from Moses, who lived from 1571–1451 B. C., to John the Apostle, who wrote Revelation about 95 A. D. And yet what remarkable *unity* these various books display.

The Bible has been defined as the *record* of the revelation and work of God as Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, establishing His Kingdom among men. Christ is its centre—Christ in His redeeming love. About the two Testaments it has been said:

“The New is in the Old contained,  
The Old is by the New explained.”

The Bible has been compared to a mirror, a laver, a lamp, a light, a fire, a sword, and a hammer, and is called sweeter than honey and honey comb. How many more such names can you enumerate?

If the question is asked: from whence do the Holy Scriptures derive their *dignity* and *authority*?, the Reformed churches answer: “We receive all these books and these only as holy and canonical, for the regulation, foundation, and confirmation of our faith, believing without any doubt all things contained in them, not so much because the Church receives and approves them as such, but more especially because the Holy Ghost witnesseth in *our hearts* that they are from God, whereof they carry the evidence in themselves, for the very blind are able to perceive that the things foretold in them are fulfilling.” (Art. V, Confession.) This shows that the main reason why we accept the Bible as inspired and authoritative is because of the testimony of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the believers. Jesus stated: “My sheep hear my voice,” John 10:27, and: “He that is of God heareth the words of God,” John 8:47. Paul tells us in 1 Cor. 2:12: “But we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might know the things that

were freely given us from God." And again: 2 Cor. 4:6: "Seeing it is God . . . who shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

But while this testimony of the Holy Spirit, expressed in texts as these, is the main ground for our acceptance of the Bible as the Word of God, our faith in it is *confirmed* by other witnesses, such as the testimony of the Bible about itself, its wonderful contents, its remarkable influence, its fulfilled prophecies and the deep mysteries contained in the Word of our God, such as those of the Holy Trinity, Christ's two natures, etc.

The unity of the Bible is also remarkable, as mentioned above. The "testimony of the spade," that is, recent excavations and discoveries in the East, also strengthens our belief in it that the Word of God is, indeed, the inspired and special revelation of the Most High. (For further discussion of the subject, see Chapter I, §6, of our *Compendium Explained*.)

We also speak of *attributes* or qualities of the Bible. They are four in number:

(1) Its *necessity*. Such is plain as we study the reasons for special revelation—see above. The light of the Word is indispensable to come to know, love, and serve God. John 5:39: "Search ye the Scriptures; for in them ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me."

(2) *Plainness*. Ps. 119:105: "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

(3) *Completeness or sufficiency*. There is no need of tradition to complete it as Rome teaches. Ps. 19:7: "The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making the simple wise." 1 Tim. 3:15: "The Holy Scriptures . . . which are able to make thee wise unto salvation." (Read Art. VII of the Confession, elucidated in our *Reformed Confession Explained*.)

(4) The divine *authority* of the Bible. Isa. 8:10: "To the law and to the testimony! If they speak not according to this Word, surely, there is no morning for them."



Luke 16:29: "They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them."

May we prayerfully, reverently, but also regularly and systematically study the Bible as God's message of redeeming mercy, that we may believe in Jesus as the Christ and thus come to know, love, and serve the true God in the proper way.

The Old Testament was originally written in the Hebrew tongue, except a few portions in Chaldee, while the New Testament was in the Greek language. Various *translations* of the Holy Scriptures have been made, the Latin translation, called the Vulgate, being one of the oldest versions, dates from the fifth century. Luther published the whole Bible in German in 1534, while the Dutch "States General" in 1637 had a Holland version printed which has been called the "States Bible." The English Authorized or King James Version dates from 1611; the English revision appeared in 1885, and the American in 1901. Chapter divisions date from the Middle Ages, and verse divisions from the sixteenth century.

The Bible being a very large book, several Churches have found it necessary to formulate and group the leading *truths* contained in the Word of God. These formulations have been called *creeds*, or official statements of belief. The purpose of a creed is threefold:

- (1) To give a clear and authoritative expression of what the Church believes;
- (2) To maintain the purity of the faith, combating false doctrine;
- (3) To promote the unity of the Church in teaching and preaching.

There are four *ecumenical* creeds, acknowledged by practically all Christian Churches, namely, the Apostles' Creed, complete in its present form about 500 A. D.; the Creed of Nicea, 325; the Creed of Athanasius, about 360; and the Creed of Chalcedon, 451. The main Protestant creeds are the Augsburg Confession of the Lutherans, 1530, and the Westminster Confession and Larger and Shorter Catechisms, 1643-1649. The Reformed Churches in the Netherlands and elsewhere have three standards, or

*formulas of unity.* The oldest one is the Confession, already quoted in this chapter. It was written mainly by Guido de Bray, in 1559. He was a Reformed preacher, who lived in what is now called Belgium, formerly a part of the Netherlands, hence the name Belgic or Netherland Confession. It contains thirty-seven articles. (See our *Reformed Confession Explained* for detailed exposition of its 37 articles, with introductory chapter.) Next comes the Heidelberg Catechism, published in 1563, and written by two professors of the University of Heidelberg, Germany, namely: Zacharias Ursinus and Caspar Olevianus. The Five Canons of Dordt were adopted by the Synod of Dordrecht in 1618 and 1619 to explain certain points of doctrine involved in the Belgic Confession and Heidelberg Catechism, and promulgated when Arminians tried to undermine the Calvinism of the fathers. The "Compendium," of which this volume is a handbook, is an abridgment of the Heidelberg Catechism, prepared in 1608 by the Rev. H. Faukelius of Middelburg, Netherlands. It was translated into English by Rev. Archibald Laidlie. It numbers in all seventy-four questions and answers, while the Heidelberg Catechism totals 129 of them, divided into fifty-two "Lord's Days," which division was made in the interests of expounding the contents of the Catechism in sermons, every Sabbath of the year, a very useful custom. Why?

### QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN WORK

- 1) What is religion in the broad sense?
- 2) What is religion in the narrow sense?
- 3) How many kinds of followers of "false" religions can you enumerate?
- 4) What is meant by "general revelation"?
- 5) Give some names and titles of the book containing the special revelation."
- 6) What is meant by inspiration?
- 7) Which are the attributes of the Bible?
- 8) Name the ecumenical creeds of Christendom.
- 9) What can you say of the formulas of Unity of the Reformed Churches?
- 10) What do you think is the great purpose of the Bible?

## CHAPTER II.

## THE FIRST PART

THE CHRISTIAN'S COMFORT. THREE MEANS TO  
OBTAIN IT. OUR MISERY—TAUGHT BY  
THE LAW

## OF THE MISERY OF MAN

Q. 1. How many things are necessary for thee to know that thou enjoying real comfort mayest live and die happily?

A. Three: first, how great my sins and miseries are; the second, how I may be delivered from all my sins and miseries; the third, how I shall express my gratitude to God for such deliverance.

Q. 2. Whence knowest thou thy misery?

A. Out of the law of God.

Q. 3. What hath God commanded thee in his law?

A. That is contained in the ten commandments, which he hath revealed in Scripture, as follows: Exodus XX and Deut. V, 6, 7, etc.

I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

I. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

II. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, nor any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them; for I, the Lord thy God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me, and showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

III. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

IV. Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy: six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God; in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; for in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.

V. Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

VI. Thou shalt not kill.

VII. Thou shalt not commit adultery.

VIII. Thou shalt not steal.

IX. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

X. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house; thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's.

Q. 4. How are the ten commandments divided?

A. Into two tables.

Q. 5. Which is the sum of what God requires of thee in the four commandments of the first table?

A. That I love the Lord my God, with all my heart, with all my soul, with all my mind, and with all my strength: this is the first and great commandment.

Q. 6. Which is the sum of what God commands thee in the six commandments of the second table?

A. That I love my neighbor as myself; on these two commandments hang the whole law and the prophets.



THE Heidelberg Catechism, of which this "Compendium" is an abridgment, is divided into three parts.

The first speaks of man's misery, the second of his deliverance or redemption, and the third of thankfulness for redemption from misery.

We find these three great truths already in the Old Testament. In Psalm 130:3, 4, the question is asked: "If thou, Jehovah, shoudest mark iniquity, O Lord, who could stand?"—that suggests misery. "But there is forgiveness with thee"—that denotes redemption. "That thou mayest be feared"—that pertains to gratitude. In the New Testament the epistle to the Romans is based on these same three points.

The excellencies of the Catechism are manifold. We mention only two: its personal address and its practical nature. The personal address is maintained throughout the book. Let us therefore search our own heart as we study it. As to the practical spirit, it is evident in the inquiry: "What is thine only *comfort*?" The Catechism places one right in the midst of this life with all of its sin and misery, a world of woe, sadly in need of redeeming mercy.

The word "comfort" is of Latin origin, meaning to be strong and brave. It indicates a state of ease and satisfaction, freedom from want and annoyance, relief from sorrow and distress. Comfort implies the knowledge and possession of a certain good over against the evil that threatens or harms. Back of comfort lies the dark fact of sin, the source of all the unhappiness and distress in the world—its "misery," (from a Latin word signifying "wretched"). This sin and misery is not alone a condition involving all mankind in general, but all of us as individuals in particular, hence the appropriateness of the singular number used in the first question. That question asks about "real" comfort, over against the substitutes for it offered by the world and sought by the children of men in service of sin and Satan. The question also asks about "enjoying" the real comfort, and that not alone for this life to "live," but also to "die" "happily," to enter the life to come.

The Heidelberg Catechism gives as answer to this opening question the following rich reply:

"That I, with body and soul, both in life and death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Savior Jesus Christ, who, with his precious blood, has fully satisfied for all my sins, and delivered me from all the power of the devil; and so preserves me, that without the will of my heavenly Father, not a hair can fall from my head; yea, that all things must be subservient to my salvation, and therefore, by his Holy Spirit, he also assures me of eternal life, and makes me sincerely willing and ready, henceforth to live unto him."

May we ponder this beautiful answer properly. It suggests the antidote for the poison of sin, the cause of our misery,—the remedy for sin's disease, and the blessed results of the gracious cure through Christ the Great Physician.

The "Compendium" is asking about the things "necessary" for us to enjoy real comfort in life and death. And in its first answer it mentions the three important things covered by the Catechism in the three main parts above alluded to: knowledge of sin and misery, of deliverance and of gratitude.

Note how the first part speaks of "how great" our sin and misery is. That must be realized to appreciate the greatness of our redemption, and to provoke to thorough gratitude.

Note also the personal feature in each of the three parts: "my" sin and misery; how "I" can be delivered; how "I" should be thankful. That suggests how the contents of these three parts must become our personal possession, based on personal conviction, including personal appropriation of Christ, and personal activity in a life of thankfulness.

It should be observed that the order of these three parts is not chronological in the sense that we must first come to know all about our sin and misery before we can be redeemed, and again know all about deliverance before we can begin to be grateful. While the knowledge of

misery, of course, to some extent precedes that of the other two parts, the three parts in their whole bearing exist side by side throughout the life of believers.

We should also observe that this tripartite division is not arbitrarily chosen.

The three parts are suggestive of our relation to the Holy Trinity (Chapter X). God the Father—before His face we should realize our sin and misery; God the Son is the One who redeems; God the Holy Spirit is active in our gratitude.

Again the three-fold offices of our Lord may be thought of (Chapter XIII): Christ as Prophet teaches us our misery; Christ the High Priest merited redemption; Christ the King is the one under whom a life of gratitude is led.

Once more, Conversion, such an important part in Christian experience, corresponds to these three divisions. Its first division should lead to repentance, the first part of true conversion, see Chapter XXIV. Its second part, faith, is included in the second division of the "Compendium," and its closing part covers conversion in its broad sense, sanctification, Chapter XXV.

The three parts therefore are of vital importance for our entire life. And that being so we find them underlying the liturgical Forms of the Reformed Churches for Baptism and Communion.

First in order, the "Compendium" discusses what must be known about our *misery*. Ques. 2: "Whence knowest thou thy misery?" The shortest division of the "Compendium" is devoted to this subject. But it is very fundamental. Especially in days of superficiality in religious life, when conviction of sin is not as thorough as at other times, it should be heeded. The less we know of what the first part contains, the less we are apt to appreciate what follows. Therefore we find the prophet Jeremiah in a time of great spiritual decline, insisting on it: "Only acknowledge (or know) thine iniquity" (Jer. 3:13).

Just how extensive this knowledge must be is difficult to determine. Some are led deeply into the matter. Think of Job's expression (42:6): "Wherefore I abhor myself,

and repent in dust and ashes." Those who drifted far away from the Lord are apt to have far deeper conviction on the subject than others, from their youth on knowing the Scriptures and walking in the footsteps of God's covenant people. But we all should come to see enough of this to say as Job: "Behold, I am vile, what shall I answer thee," (40:4); and like Isaiah 6:5, "Woe is me, for I am undone."

But how can we come to *know* our misery, as the result of sin? Important question! Of ourselves we cannot rightly know our misery in its nature and extent, much less in its cause and cure. We may to some degree observe its workings in the life of the individual and of society, and be convinced, as the poet says, that "this is a bad, twisted, topsy-turvy world, where all the heaviest wrongs get uppermost."

But as a rule we ascribe these things to secondary causes, forgetting that *sin* is the real cause of all. Only regenerated hearts feel, only Spirit-enlightened eyes see our misery.

What *means* does the Lord employ to teach his people how great our misery is? The instrument used is "the *law* of God." A law may be defined as a rule of life to be obeyed. God's laws are the expression of his will regarding his creatures. Natural laws are those which come to us through general revelation. They are found, for example, in natural science, mathematics, etc. Can you name some?

The laws here being discussed are given by special revelation, embodied in the Word of God. Rom. 3:20: "For through the law cometh the knowledge of sin." This must not be understood in the sense that the law itself and in itself, can effect this. It is the law as explained and applied to our heart by the Holy Spirit of God of whom the Savior gave the promise that He would "come and convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness and of judgment" (John 16:8). And our prayer should often be a pleading on the blessed declaration of our Lord (Luke 11:13): "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." We



should feel encouraged and emboldened the more to do this since this declaration is also included in the promises sealed to us as covenant people in Baptism (Chapter XXI).

Speaking of the law of God, we should bear in mind that the Bible speaks of three kinds of divine laws. The first is named the *ceremonial* law, about the various religious rites of the Old Testament dispensation. The second is the *civil* law of Israel as a nation. The third is the *moral* law, the Ten Commandments of Exodus 20, often called the Decalogue or "Ten Words." While we can learn something of our misery by a careful and prayerful study of what the first two kinds of laws contain, it is particularly the Moral Law which God uses to open our eyes to see what we are by nature before a holy God. The law is to be "a schoolmaster" (R. V. tutor) to bring us unto Christ (Gal. 3:24), that is, to lead us to the Savior, in true conversion. That is the use of the law made in the first part of the Compendium. There is a second use of the law made in part III (Lesson XXVI), on the law as rule of a life of sanctification.

The Moral Law shows us what God demands of us. Essentially it requires that we should love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, and our neighbors as ourselves (Matt. 22:37-40). The first is the chief content of the first four Commandments, the first "table," and the second of the remaining six Commandments of the second "table"—an expression taken from Ex. 31:18: "And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon Mount Sinai, the two tables of the testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God." It is by way of comparing ourselves as we are, to what God demands of us, that God's people come to the proper realization of how great our sin and misery is. Love is required by these commands. Love is the fulfilment of the law (Rom. 13:10), or, as stated in 1 Tim. 1:5: "But the end of the charge (commandment) is love out of a pure heart and a good conscience and faith unfeigned." The chief elements of love are proper appreciation, sincere desire for fellowship, and earnest endeavor in service. In

short, a life of consecration, ceaseless and whole-hearted and complete.

Now, it is very evident, as we come to see ourselves at all in the light of God's Word, that we by nature are far from measuring up to this divine standard, we who are born with an inclination of hatred against God and man in our heart, and with a tendency to break all God's commandments, as the next lesson will explain further.

The law of God shows us what we should be before God and man. And as the Holy Spirit illumines us we see by way of contrast what we really are and how much we "all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God," (Romans 3:23).

We are taught how great our misery is, principally in three respects:

- (1) We are shown the *magnitude* of our sins of commission and omission;
- (2) We see the *multitude* of our transgressions in thoughts, words, and actions;
- (3) We begin to see that our "misery" is involving *penalty*, for time and eternity, since the law of love we transgressed is the law of One who will not hold the guilty guiltless (Ex. 20:4-6).

May we often pray: "Open thou my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law" (Psalm 119:18). Are we uttering this prayer fervently?

### QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN WORK

- 1) What is meant by "comfort" in life and death—as inquired about in our Catechism?
- 2) Which are the three parts which we must come to know?
- 3) Mention the correspondence of these three parts to other important Bible truths.
- 4) Why is it so important to know "how great our sins and miseries" are?
- 5) What is a law in general?

- 6) Which "natural laws" can you name?
- 7) What is meant by the "Ceremonial Laws" of the O. T.?
- 8) Have the "Civil Laws" of the Bible any value for us as a nation?
- 9) What do you know of the giving of the "Moral Law"?
- 10) What are we taught mainly through the "Moral Law"?

## CHAPTER III.

OUR MISERY IN ITS NATURE—ITS ORIGIN NOT  
IN OUR CREATION

**Q. 7. Canst thou keep all these things perfectly?**

**A. In no wise: for I am prone to hate God and my neighbor, and to transgress the commandments of God in thought, word and deed.**

**Q. 8. Hath God created thee naturally so wicked and perverse?**

**A. By no means, but He created me good and after His own image, in true knowledge of God, in righteousness and holiness.**

**I**N THE previous lesson we learned of the demands of the Moral Law—to love God above all, and our neighbor as ourselves, and that ceaselessly, whole-heartedly, and completely. It became evident already that comparison of ourselves, to this great and divine standard, brought out the fact of our misery.

The present lesson brings out that contrast the sharper by showing the *nature* of our misery, in its disabling results, and it inquires, moreover, as to the *origin* of our misery.

We are first asked about our ability to “keep all these things perfectly”—all the things included in the requirements of the Moral Law. To “keep” means to observe, to obey, to maintain, in letter and in spirit. So the angels in heaven are doing, mighty in strength, fulfilling His Word, hearkening unto His voice (Ps. 103:20). Alas, that cannot be said of us fallen creatures. The reverse. Note the humiliating answer: “In no wise.” That means in no manner or degree. Already Solomon in his days discovered: “Surely, there is not a righteous man upon the earth that doeth good and sinneth not” (Eccl. 7:20). And Jeremiah told in a striking figures of speech: “Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil” (Jeremiah 13:23).

And the answer is still more humiliating as it con-



tinues: "For I am prone by nature to hate God and my neighbor, and to transgress the commandments of God in thought, word, and deed."

But however humbling for us, the above is the Bible's plain teaching as to man in his fallen condition. Paul assured us: "The carnal mind is enmity against God" (Romans 8:7), and in Titus 3:3 he described our natural condition in the following way: "For we also once were foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another."

The plain fact is, no man, in his own unaided strength, can keep the Law of God. Three things are in our way—all of them results of sin. The first is our *ignorance* pertaining to God and divine matters. "We also were once foolish," that is "unwise," without the proper conceptions of God, of his holiness and of our misery, not even knowing ourselves aright; easily "deceived," so that superficial, formal religion satisfies us; content to compare ourselves to others, fallen as we are, without realizing what God's standard really requires.

The second thing in our way of obeying God is our spiritual *impotence* or disability, our inability to love God above all and our neighbor as ourselves (Romans 8:7, 8): "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be; and they that are in the flesh cannot please God."

The third obstacle in the way of law-keeping is our *unwillingness*. By nature our language is as that of Job 21:14, 15: "And they say unto God, depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty that we should serve Him?" Instead of properly obeying, we are "prone by nature," that is we have a tendency, an inclination, to hate God and our neighbor. As soon as we are provoked in any way we reveal this proneness, and "transgress the commandments of God." We do this, the "Compendium" says, in three ways: in thought, word, and deed.

In *thought*: "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5).

In *word*: "And the tongue is a fire; the world of iniquity among our members is the tongue" (James 3:6).

In *deed*: John 3:19: "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness, rather than light, because their deeds (R. V. works) were evil."

Isaiah 64:6: "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags," (R. V. "as a polluted garment"). Surely, the Bible plainly proves, and the history of individuals and groups of individuals confirms: "for we have all sinned, and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). May we see and feel and deplore this.

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And now the question arises, as put in Question 8 of the "Compendium": "Hath God *created* thee naturally so wicked and perverse?" "Wicked" means "bad," in principle and practice, deviating from the divine law, sinful, depraved. "Perverse" signifies: wilfully wrong, and erring, refractory, wayward, turned from the right. Surely, God, our Creator, did not make us so. Did not already the wise Solomon utter it: "Behold, this only have I found: that God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions"? The "Compendium" furnishes a clean-cut answer: "By no means; but He created **me good and** after His own image, in the true knowledge of God, in righteousness and in holiness." "Good" indicates that we were without imperfections, in body and in soul (physically, morally and spiritually) and able to reach the end or purpose of our creation, namely, to know, love, and serve God acceptably.

This knowledge, righteousness, and holiness compose what is called God's *image*. Gen. 1:27: "So God created man in His own image." Image means the same as "likeness," as a picture of a person. 2 Peter 1:4 in that sense speaks of believers to "become partakers of the divine nature," that is, image-bearers of God. We usually distinguish between God's image in a broad and in a narrow sense. In the *wide* meaning it indicates man's intellectual and moral nature, his personality, with reason, memory, judgment, will, and affections. Immortality may be con-

sidered a likeness of Him "who only hath immortality," (1 Tim. 6:16), that is, in the absolute sense, and dominion over the lower creation (Gen. 1:28), as a reflection of God's absolute sovereignty over all his creation. The gift of speech may well be considered to belong to the image of God in this sense. Some have accounted for the beginnings of language from imitation of natural sounds; others: automatic sounds made during work or play, and still others claim that speech began in gesture or pantomime. But we believe that human speech, a combination of phonation and articulation, originally was a gift of God, part of the endowments of God's image, in the wide sense.

In the *narrow* sense God's image embraces far deeper things. It includes *true* knowledge, thorough and correct, a reflection of God's own perfect knowledge, and true righteousness and holiness, even as God in an absolute sense is the righteous Jehovah, the Holy One of Israel. We learn that these three things are component parts of God's image in that sense, from the teaching of the New Testament. Paul discourses of believers transformed after God's likeness (Coll. 3:10): "having put on the new man that is being renewed unto *knowledge*, after the image of Him that created him." And again, in Eph. 4:24: "And put on the new man, that after God hath been created in *righteousness* and *holiness* of truth." Through this *knowledge* man was able originally to be a prophet, knowing God and His will and ways. Through his *righteousness* he was a king. Psalm 8:6: "Thou makest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands." Through *holiness* of heart and of life, man in Paradise was a priestly being.

In view of all this, we may well ask wonderingly as in Psalm 8:4, 5: "What is man that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that Thou visitest him? For Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels and hast crowned him with glory and honor."

Surely, God as our Creator, can not be charged with our inability to keep the Law perfectly. For *unable* we have become. We have lost God's image in the narrow sense, like a picture nearly effaced, a coin whose superscription has practically worn off. And that loss of God's

image includes our inability to keep God's holy law aright or to do any good. What the character of that inability is we shall see in Chapter V, in which the various kinds of "good" we can enumerate, will also be discussed. In connection with the present lesson it suffices to bring out that we, instead of being able, as God's image-bearers to reflect His virtues, to know, love, and serve God properly, are, as Paul puts it in Coll. 1:13: "dead in your sins," or, as in Eph. 2:1: "dead through your trespasses and sins."

Death is here compared to a realm wherein we are existing. And several truly awful things pertain to it. First of all, death, according to the meaning of the Bible words employed, signifies *separation*. In this case separation from God, the living God, the source of all life. Isaiah 59:2: "But your iniquities have separated between you and God."

Secondly, death includes *impotence*, spiritual helplessness. A corpse is without strength. Rom. 5:6: "For when ye were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." In a dead body, although the physical organs, eye and ear, etc., may be there, they are of no avail, since the vital force needed for their operation is lacking. So it is with us spiritually. Hence the challenge of Jer. 13:23 about the inability of the sinner to do good compared to that of the Ethiopian to change his skin or of the leopard his spots.

Thirdly, spiritual death includes *corruption*. Physical death, of which it is a picture, is a process of dissolution, necessitating the use of the grave. So we find Isaiah depicting the Israel of his days, a people laden with iniquity, as "covered with wounds and bruises and putrifying sores" (Isaiah 1:4-6). In the same way we find the corrupting disease of leprosy employed as a type of sin's destructive work. This corruption pertained to all the faculties of our soul: our mind, heart, and will. Even our conscience cannot always be relied on. It may be a false guide, as in the case of Paul (Acts 26:9) and Israel (Romans 10:2). In short, as stated in Psalm 14:1-4: "They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good. . . . They are all gone aside."



Fourthly, spiritual death includes *uncleanness*. Among Israel the dead were ceremonially unclean. Therefore Nazarites, separated to Jehovah, should not come near to dead bodies, even of their parents. That would make them unclean (Numbers 6:6-8). So are we by nature before a holy God. It behooves us, like the lepers of old, to cry: "Unclean, unclean!" (Lev. 13:45). Isaiah realized this in the temple vision. After the cry of the seraphim: "holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts," the prophet exclaims, realizing the contrast brought out: "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips."

Spiritual death also includes the idea of *insensibility*. We by nature do not see nor feel "how great our sins and miseries" are, nor in what danger we are as long as we are not redeemed.

Finally, like in the dead, the process of life in its uniting power and activity is *reversed*, so we in our spiritual state of death are perverted, loose from God, active only in "serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice an envy, hateful, hating one another" (Titus 3:3). Indeed, ours is a dreadful state, a fearful condition, and a terrible future, unless divine grace interfere. Our name is "Ichabod" because our glory has departed (1 Sam. 5:21). "Our only help is sovereign grace, our sole physician God." The history of nations shows this as well as of individuals.

### QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN WORK

- 1) Prove from the Bible that we cannot keep the Law perfectly.
- 2) Which three things are obstacles in our way of proper law-keeping?
- 3) In which three ways do we transgress God's Law?
- 4) What does "wicked and perverse" mean?
- 5) What is God's image in a wider sense?
- 6) Which three parts belong to God's image in a narrow sense?
- 7) What is meant by separation from God?
- 8) How can you prove our spiritual impotence?
- 9) In which ways are we corrupt?
- 10) What does it mean, our spiritual uncleanness?

## CHAPTER IV.

THE REAL ORIGIN OF OUR MISERY: THE FALL.  
THE COVENANT OF WORKS.

- Q. 9. Whence then proceeds that depravity which is in thee?
- A. From the fall and disobedience of Adam and Eve in Paradise; hence our nature is become so corrupt, that we are all conceived and born in sin.
- Q. 10. What was that disobedience?
- A. That they did eat of the fruit of the tree which God had forbidden them.
- Q. 11. Does the disobedience of Adam concern us?
- A. Certainly; for he is the father of us all; and we have all sinned in him.

**I**N THIS lesson we continue to trace the origin of our misery, taught by the Law. We saw that our Creator could not be charged with it. "By no means." He made us good physically, morally, spiritually. To make God in any way or degree the author of sin is blasphemous. Job 34:10: "Far be it from God, that He should do wickedness, and from the Almighty that He should commit iniquity." Repeatedly Genesis records in the first chapter that God's handiwork was "good," even as Eccl. 7:29 teaches: "Behold, this only have I found, that God made man upright." But since it is patent that we are no longer good but depraved, the question is asked: "Whence then *proceeds* that depravity which is in thee?" Observe again the personal note in this searching question. We are apt to notice sin in others. But it is a universal phenomenon. It is in each individual. And the answer points us to Paradise and what occurred there. Some in our days and long ago, have spoken of the Genesis account about Paradise and the fall which occurred therein, as a myth, legend, or allegory. From this it would follow that no one knows how sin entered into the world. But sin is an

outstanding and fearful fact in human experience and history. Is it reasonable to assume that God should have left us in the dark about this? Fact is, the whole Bible is a revelation about *salvation from sin*. Would God leave us uninformed as to its *origin*?

Furthermore, if the first part of Genesis should be mythical and legendary, what about the rest of that and of the other Bible books? No, we believe the Genesis account of the creation as well as of the fall in Paradise to be *history*, even as inspired Paul referred to Adam as a historic person, and to his sin as an historical fact (Rom. 5:12-19); 1 Cor. 15:21, 22; 1 Tim. 2:13, 14). Our Lord himself made reference to the Genesis accounts in Matt. 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-9; and John 8:44. In fact, we are told (1 John 3:8): "To this end was the Son of God *manifested* that He might destroy the works of the devil." If one does not take the Paradise story literally, Calvary cannot properly be accounted for.

In the Genesis account the name Paradise is given to "a garden eastward, in Eden" (Gen. 2:8), in which God put man after his creation. A river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from thence it parted and became four heads, that is, head-streams, of which two are known today as the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. Hence the geographical location must be found near the head of the Persian Gulf, in Asia. "Eden" means delight or "pleasantness," therefore the district of Paradise must have been a very delightful part of God's creation, a "pleasure ground" or park, as the word Paradise signifies. Compare Isaiah 51:3. There the Lord God had assigned the dwelling-place of the first human ancestor, Adam, made in his image, and of Eve his wife. And there took place the great tragedy known as the Fall and Disobedience of Adam and Eve. "Hence our nature is become so corrupt, that we are all conceived and born in sin."

In answer to the question, "What was that disobedience?" we are told that it consisted in eating of the fruit of the tree which God had forbidden them. What that tree was is plain from Gen. 2:16, 17, "And Jehovah commanded the man, saying: of every tree in the garden thou mayest

freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die."

The command here referred to is usually called the *Probationary Command*, given to test man as to his whole-hearted devotion to God and implicit obedience to his command. It was a part of what is usually known as the *Covenant of Works*, or *Covenant of Life*, named in Hosea 6:7: "But they like Adam have transgressed the Covenant."

There were three *elements* in this Covenant or Agreement: condition, promise, and penalty. The condition was perfect obedience to God. This was to be tested by the Probationary Command about the tree above referred to. The promise was eternal life, promised not alone to Adam but also to his posterity. The penalty was death. We distinguish between *three kinds* of death, all of them included in the penalty: spiritual death: separation from God as to our soul or spirit, involving spiritual corruption as that of a plant whose root is corrupt; corporal death, the decay and dissolution of our body; and eternal death, signifying everlasting separation from God and deprivation of all his blessings.

The Bible tells us that this Covenant, alas, was not kept, but broken. That took place through the instigation of Satan, a fallen angel, the prince of the devils, Chapter XI. Wilful disobedience was the disobedience of our first parents, as related in Genesis 3:1-7. It was not to be charged to God. He forbade them to eat of the tree. He had made man good and perfect, a rational and moral being, with a free will. His mind was like to a golden lamp, brightly burning. We know this from his ability to give names to all the animals brought "unto man to see what he would call them, and whatsoever the man called every living creature, that was the name thereof" (Gen. 2:19). His disposition, his inclinations, in accord with which he determined his acts of choice, were good. They inclined his power of willingness to the good.

True, Adam was "mutable," due to his being finite; only the Infinite God is unchangeable. But the whole arrange-



ment was a gracious one. God in substance said to the primal pair that if they were perfectly obedient for a limited time, they and their posterity would be elevated to a lasting state of blessedness. While Satan was allowed to tempt man, he had power to resist him, due to his creation in a "state of integrity." But instead of obeying the Lord implicitly, man yielded to the devil's tempting proposal: "Ye shall not surely die, for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:4-6).

In this story we find that Satan began by trying to becloud the understanding of man, and to arouse his *doubt*. That is shown by the insinuating question put by the serpent to the woman: "Yea, hath God said, ye shall not eat of any tree of the garden?" Then *unbelief* was aroused: "Ye shall not surely die," although Eve knew full well what God's threat was as to the penalty of transgression. Next we find *pride* manifesting itself in the desire to be as God, knowing good and evil.

The following step was *coveting* or lust: "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise."

Finally there came the evil *deed*: "She took of the fruit thereof and did eat; and she gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat" (Gen. 3:6).

If we analyze this simple but impressive and psychological story, we find five sad things in this fall and disobedience. It was in the first place a contempt of divine authority, plainly expressed. Agreeable to divine disposition man should have been content with the other trees of the garden. Genesis 2:2.

In the second place it included, as we indicated, the sins of doubt, unbelief, pride, and lust. Thirdly it was an attempt to detrone God. Not *He* was to determine what was good, but his creature. Fourthly, it showed preference for the devil's friendship above that of man's gracious Maker and Covenant Jehovah. Finally, it manifested a fearful *disregard* for the welfare of Adam's posterity, the human race, comprehended in the command of Gen. 1:28:

"And God blessed them and God said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth."

Now, this inclusion of *posterity* was not simply because Adam was our natural head, our first-ancestor. That would, of course, explain our *depravity*, since the Bible tells us that an evil tree cannot bear good fruit. And already Job asked the question: "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean?" (Job 14:4).

But we learn from the Bible that we are considered *guilty* before God as well. We are said to have "sinned in him." Romans 5:12: "Therefore as through one man sin entered into the world and death through sin, and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned." Romans 5:18: "Through one trespass the judgment came upon all men to condemnation." In other words, Adam was not alone our *natural* but also our *federal* head, as the head of the Covenant of Works. As such he represented us. Had he obtained eternal life, promised in the Covenant here considered, that reward would have been bestowed upon all his offspring, though they had not personally merited it. By the same token, all his posterity shared in the penalty, since Adam violated the terms of the Covenant. All are reckoned *guilty* before God, in Adam. Just like when an absolute monarch is victorious in his warfare, his subjects share in the fruits of his victory, bringing them prosperity, so when he is defeated, all his people suffer through the sad consequences of his defeat. Because such a monarch is the head of the State and of the Nation which he represents, for good or for ill, in what is called "corporate responsibility."

The same mode of representation we find applied to Christ, the last Adam, the head of a better Covenant, Heb. 7:22. That is one of the *laws* of God, evident in the realms of nature and natural life, as well as in the spiritual world. Hence the affirmative answer of our "Compendium" to the question: "Does the disobedience of Adam concern us?" Indeed, in what Adam did in Paradise—"falling away from his God, and falling unto Satan," as our fathers put it, we find the real source and origin of the depravity that is ours, so that none of us is able to

keep God's holy Law. What serious consequences are involved in this the next lesson brings out. May we come to recognize that "we all sinned in him," the first Adam, the head of the Covenant of Works, and let us seek our salvation in the head of the better Covenant! (Heb. 7:22; 1 Cor. 15:45-47.)

### QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN WORK

- 1) What can you tell about the garden of Eden?
- 2) What can you tell about the tree of knowledge of good and evil and why it was named thus?
- 3) What can you say about the condition of the Covenant of Works?
- 4) What was its promise?
- 5) What its penalty?
- 6) Why should we consider the Probationary Command a gracious arrangement?
- 7) Which steps can you trace in the story of the fall?
- 8) Why do we speak of "contempt of divine authority" as an element in this disobedience?
- 9) Why can it be named an attempt to "dethrone" God?
- 10) Who is the Head of that other and better Covenant and wherein may He be compared to the first Adam?

## CHAPTER V.

OUR MISERY—SEEN IN THE RESULTS  
OF THE FALL

- Q. 12.** Are we then incapable of doing any good of ourselves, and prone to all manner of wickedness?
- A.** Indeed we are: unless we are regenerated by the Spirit of God.
- Q. 13.** Will God suffer such disobedience and corruption to go unpunished?
- A.** By no means: but in his just judgment will punish them, both in time and eternity, as it is written: "cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the Law, to do them."

**I**N the previous lesson we found Question 9 asking about our "depravity," namely, in the query: "Whence then proceeds that depravity which is in thee?" And we learned that it originated in Adam's Fall, involving us, since he was not merely our natural head, but especially our federal and covenant head. As the *Shorter Catechism* of Westminster puts it: "The covenant being made with Adam and not only for himself but for his posterity, all mankind, descending from him by ordinary generation, sinned in him and fell by him in his first transgression." (Question 16.)

The depravity in which we thus came to share is a fearful result of the Fall. The word itself is full of ominous meaning. According to its derivation it signifies being "thoroughly crooked." It indicates the corruption of our human nature, as this, from generation to generation, is inherited from our first ancestor. And the Reformed and biblical conception of our corruptness, our crookedness, is that it has ruined us through and through, in the sight of a holy God. That thoroughgoing feature of our perversity is expressed in the term "*total depravity*." The



“Compendium” asks in Question 12, printed above this lesson: “Are we then incapable of doing any good of ourselves, and prone to all manner of wickedness?” And the unequivocating reply is: “Indeed we are, unless we are regenerated by the Spirit of God.” Now, about that work of regeneration we are to learn in Chapter XV. We confine ourselves here to our being “incapable of doing any good of ourselves” and “prone to all manner of wickedness.”

Note well that we are declared incapable, that means unable, unfit, to do *any good* of ourselves. We differentiate between *four kinds* of good. There is first of all *natural* good, as manifested in the proper care of our own person and our beloved ones. Secondly, there is *moral* or *civic good*, performed by us as good fellow-citizens, devoted patriots. And thirdly, there is *ceremonial* good, shown in such things as church attendance and other duties connected with worship. (Luke 18:12.)

These three kinds of good we are able to perform even while not regenerated by the Spirit of God. But that is not because of our own natural ability, but due to the influences of common grace about which we shall learn something in Chapter XV.

The fourth kind of good we enumerate is called “*spiritual*” good. That is manifested in the acts of faith, hope, and love in the true and full sense of these words (I Cor. 13:13). This kind of good is shown in what we named in the definition of the Christian religion: the proper knowledge of the true God and loving and serving Him aright. Spiritual good also includes conversion in its two parts, repentance and faith, and sanctification without which no man shall see God, as explained in Lessons XXIV and XXV.

In short, as Hebrews 12:28 puts it: spiritual good signifies “grace whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe.” This “good” none of us can render in our state of nature. Indeed, even though we be regenerated: “Even the holiest of men, while in this life, have only small beginnings of this obedience.” (Question 114 of the Catechism.)

This total depravity of ours is not alone comprehending incapability to do any good of ourselves, but also, as

already named, includes being "prone to all manner of wickedness." "Prone" is a word of Latin origin meaning "forward" or "toward." It signifies being inclined or disposed, having a leaning or bent, a propensity, that is, in this sense, toward evil. That does not mean that we actually *do* all kinds of evil in all manner of ways. Then we should be like Satan and his host. Moreover, there are restraining influences at work in us, such as education, civilization, our conscience, and fear of men. But "prone" means that we are so *inclined* naturally that through the choice of our will, or on provocation, we are apt to commit all kinds of sin, and transgress God's holy law in its two tables, in thought, word, and deed.

That this inclination or disposition is indeed ours is plain from the pages of human history, from the earliest times to the present. And when we come to see ourselves, illumined by the Holy Spirit, we see it more or less plainly and cry out as Job: "Behold I am vile" (Job 18:40).

Now, this incapability and proneness, is something that God observes. And it provokes the Almighty to punishment. Already in the days of Moses the Lord declared that when His people would turn to other gods, and serve them, and provoke Him, and break His covenant, many evils and troubles would befall Israel (Deut. 31:20, 21). So it is today, and ever will be.

Therefore, in answer to the question of the "Compendium": "Will God suffer such disobedience and corruption to go unpunished?"—an emphatic and ominous reply is given. "By no means, but in His just judgment will *punish* them, both in time and eternity, as it is written: Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them" (Gal. 3:10). God's own nature requires this just punishment, because of His attributes of justice, truth, and holiness. (See Lesson VI.) Already Adam experienced this as God told him, Gen. 3:17-19: "Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree of which I commanded thee, saying, thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in toil thou shalt eat of it all the days of thy life; thorns also and thistles shall it

bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat of the herb of the field; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken; for dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." "The wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).

This punishment also included man's being sent forth from the garden of Eden, thus losing his home as well as his happiness. It also embraced the loss of God's image in the narrow sense. (Lesson III.)

And it likewise involved Adam's *posterity*, so that already in his oldest son Cain we behold what terrible fruit sin bore. When God had respect for his brother Abel's offering and not to Cain's, we behold Cain "very wroth," and the Lord told him "sin coucheth at the door; and unto thee shall be its desire" (Gen. 4:4-8). Instead of Cain ruling over sin, as God commanded him, he slew Abel, his own brother! And still the punishment of sin continues, "both in time and eternity," as we keep on sinning.

Sin has been defined as "want of conformity unto, or transgression of the law of God." Our sins are classified in various ways. Ours is *original* sin, including being considered *guilty* with original *guilt*, as Adam's sin is *imputed*, or reckoned, unto us, and original *pollution*, the taint or stain of sin, which we inherit. Ours is *actual* sin, in thoughts, words, and deeds, called sins of *commission*; ours are likewise sins of *omission*, as we fail to live up to the requirements of God's law. 1 John 3:4: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law." James 4:17: "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."

And all of that does not remain "unpunished," neither here and now nor hereafter. As the *Shorter Catechism* expresses it: "All mankind, by their fall, lost communion with God, are under his wrath and curse, and so made liable to all miseries in this life, to death itself, and to the pains of hell forever" (Question 19).

"What are the punishments of sin in *this world*?" the *Larger Catechism* asks (Question 28). Answer: "The punishments of sin in this world are either *inward*, as blindness of mind, a reprobate sense, strong delusions,

hardness of heart, horror of conscience, and vile affections; or *outward*, as the curse of God upon the creatures for our sake, and all other evils that befall us in our bodies, names, estates, relations and employments, together with death itself."

"What are the punishments of sin in the *world to come*?" (Question 29). Answer: "The punishments of sin in the world to come are, everlasting separation from the comfortable presence of God, and most grievous torments in soul and body, without intermission, in hell-fire forever." (2 Thess. 1:9; Mark 9:43, 44; Luke 16:24, 26; Rev. 14:11; John 3:36.) Fearful indeed is our misery, as shown by contrast to God's law, and in the comprehensiveness of its scope. May we learn, while it is still the time wherein God may be found, to flee from the wrath to come and to escape for our lives (Matt. 3:7 and Gen. 19:17).

### QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN WORK

- 1) What does "depravity" signify?
- 2) Which are the four kinds of good we speak of?
- 3) What is meant by "spiritual" good?
- 4) What does it mean: "prone" to all manner of wickedness?
- 5) Why does God's own nature require just punishment of sin?
- 6) What did Adam experience of the wages of sin?
- 7) How do we classify sin?
- 8) Mention some of the punishments of sin in this life.
- 9) Mention some of the punishments of sin in the hereafter.
- 10) Why do we believe in "everlasting" punishment?



## THE SECOND PART

### OF MAN'S DELIVERANCE

#### CHAPTER VI.

#### THE MEDIATOR WE NEED

**Q. 14.** By what means canst thou escape this punishment, and be again received into favor?

**A.** By such a Mediator, who is in one person very God, and a real righteous man.

**Q. 15.** Who is that Mediator?

**A.** Our Lord Jesus Christ, who in one person is true God, and a real righteous man.

**Q. 16.** Could not the angels be our mediators?

**A.** No; for they are neither God nor man.

**Q. 17.** Cannot the saints be our mediators?

**A.** No; for they themselves have sinned, and have obtained salvation by no other means, than through this Mediator.

**W**E HAVE now come to the study of the second part of the *Compendium*, about "Man's Deliverance." It is the largest part of the book, in the main devoted to an exposition of the *Apostles' Creed* in its twelve articles. The fourteenth question, printed above this chapter, is a very important one. We learned from previous questions and answers that our misery is indeed very great, and punishment merited and inevitable. Now the question is put as to the possibility of escaping from our ruin, presuming such an escape to be possible. "By what means canst thou escape this punishment and be again received into favor?" is asked. Note the double blessing included. Not alone escape of punishment, but restoration to God's favor, as Adam enjoyed such favor in Paradise, or even

better. The possibility of this is opened as the prospect of a Mediator is revealed to us.

A mediator is a person interposing between parties at variance, endeavoring to righten relationship between those involved in the case. In history sometimes one nation fills the rôle of such mediatorship, in mediating between nations at war, trying to obtain a mutually satisfactory basis for the establishment of peace. Now, when it comes to a mediator who can bring together, on the one hand, the Most High God, whose covenant has been broken by wilful disobedience, at the instigation of God's adversary, Satan, and on the other hand, offending children of men, totally depraved, then we realize that no ordinary person can function acceptably. The requirements are very high. The "Compendium" informs us that escape and restoration are possible "by such a mediator who in one person is very God and a real righteous man." And no wonder such an one is needed. For, if a mediator is to efficiently perform his work, he must satisfy all the demands of God for us and bring us to God.

God's *demands*—what are they? That we atone for our transgressions and come to know, love, and serve God aright, reaching the purpose of creation. These demands must be met acceptably. Because God's own attributes are included in this, as already noted in the previous chapter.

God's *justice* required satisfaction. Psalm 7:11: "God is a *righteous* Judge, yea, a God that hath indignation every day." God's *truth* demanded satisfaction. Already in Paradise God declared death to follow transgression of his law (Gen. 3:3). In Lev. 18:5 He had commanded: "Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and mine ordinances; which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am Jehovah." By inference this announced death upon disobedience.

And through Ezekiel it was told repeatedly: "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:4, 20). The God of truth cannot alter these announcements, unless satisfaction were made.

God's *holiness* also required satisfaction. (See Chapter

IX on God's Attributes.) Hab. 1:13: "Thou that art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and that thou canst not look on perverseness." Nah. 1:2-3: "Jehovah is a jealous God and avengeth; Jehovah avengeth and is full of wrath; Jehovah taketh vengeance on his adversaries and he reserveth wrath for his enemies. Jehovah is slow to anger, and great in power, and will by no means clear the guilty." John 3:36: "He that obeyeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

Now it is very evident that we, fallen beings, cannot and could not meet these demands. Instead of doing so, we daily increase our debt. Job 9:2, 3: "But how can man be just with God? If he be pleased to contend with him, he cannot answer him one of a thousand." Rom. 3:20: "Because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight." Isa. 64:6: "For we are all become as one that is unclean, and all our righteousnesses are as a polluted garment: and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away."

*Animals* could not meet God's demands, nor *angels*. As to the first named creatures we read: "For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins" (Heb. 10:4). As to the last named beings: "They are neither God nor man," but "ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation" (Heb. 1:14). Moreover, as the Heidelberg Catechism puts it in answer to the question: "Can there be found anywhere, one who is a mere creature, able to satisfy for us . . .?": "None; for first, God will not punish any other creature for the sin which man hath committed; and further, no mere creatures can sustain the burden of God's eternal wrath against sin, so as to deliver others from it."

That "saints" or so-called holy men—as Rome teaches—could be mediators is also out of the question, "for they themselves have sinned, and have obtained salvation by no other means than through this Mediator." Moreover, Job 15:14: "What is man, that he should be clean? And he that is born of a woman that he should be righteous?" Compare 1 John 1:8 and John 14:6.

What we named makes it very evident that the Mediator we need is one "who in one person is very God and a real righteous man."

He should be *God* for at least two reasons. The one is: to support his human nature in his mediatorial work, for we may well ask as Psalm 90:11: "Who knoweth the power of thine anger, and thy wrath according to the fear that is due unto thee?" And in Isa. 43:11 it was plainly declared: "I, even I am Jehovah; and besides Me there is no Savior." Hosea 1:7: "I will save them by Jehovah their God."

And the second reason necessitating a divine Mediator is that infinite value might be given to his merits, for infinite value was needed to redeem the innumerable multitude to be reconciled and restored to God's favor, Rev. 7:9.

But the Mediator needed had also to be a real man, and a righteous man. A *real* man, because the justice of God required that the same human nature which had sinned should make satisfaction for sin. Therefore we read in Heb. 2:17: "Wherefore it behooved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren . . . to make propitiation for the sins of the people." He should, moreover, be a *righteous* man, able to satisfy for others, "For such a high priest became us, holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (Heb. 7:26). John 8:46: "Which of you convicteth Me of sin?" Indeed, very lofty demands were required in the needed mediator.

And what general revelation did not make known to us, God has graciously manifested in his special revelation. For that has revealed to us the One about whom it was declared: "For there is one God, one Mediator also between God and men, himself *man*, Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5).

And He also is the divine Lord, "Jehovah, our Righteousness" (Jer. 23:6), whose merits were so valuable that He could purchase his Church with his own blood (Acts 20:28). "And in none other there is salvation: for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among



men, wherein we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). It was this Christ who brought about the required satisfaction. He is the One, wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities (Isa. 53:5).

This Mediator rendered a twofold obedience, *active* and *passive*. His *active* obedience comprehended keeping the law for us perfectly, thus obtaining life, eternal life, for all reckoned in him. Matt. 20:28: "The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many." He is the One about whom already Isaiah prophesied as coming, glorious in his apparel, marching in the greatness of his strength, able to say: "Therefore mine own arm brought salvation unto Me" (Isa. 63:1-5). He is the One with whose stripes we are healed (Isa. 53:5), the One "who by one offering hath perfected forever them that are sanctified" (Heb. 10:14).

Our Mediator's *passive* obedience consisted in bearing and enduring to the end all the suffering due us. "The chastisement of our peace was upon him" (Isa. 53:5).

And our Lord has rendered a satisfaction that was acceptable, because actual, complete, and personal. It was *actual*, he laid down his life for his sheep (John 10:11; Heb. 9:28). It was *complete*: on the cross he exclaimed: "It is finished" (John 19:30). It was *personal*: not alone being for his Church (Acts 20:28), but for each individual whose name was in the book of life (Phil. 4:3).

What a wonderful Mediator we have! And we should admire the divine plan of redemption the more since the Mediator God gave was God and man "in one person." This was because his personality was that of the Son of God, the second person of the Holy Trinity, as Chapter X explains. He had adopted the human nature, assuming it in a personal union with his divine (Chapter XII).

Indeed, let us admire the wisdom and love of God in giving us this so greatly needed Mediator, and seek a saving interest in Him in the way of faith, as set forth in the next lesson.

## QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN WORK

- 1) What is a mediator?
- 2) What is required of one to effect our salvation?
- 3) Which attributes of God demand satisfaction?
- 4) Why should our Mediator be God?
- 5) Why should he be a real man?
- 6) Why should he be a righteous man?
- 7) What is meant by the active obedience our Mediator rendered?
- 8) What is meant by his passive obedience?
- 9) What can you say about the nature of the satisfaction rendered?
- 10) Why was the Mediator to be "in one person" very God and a real, righteous man?

## CHAPTER VII.

## FAITH—ITS ELEMENTS AND KINDS

**Q. 18.** Shall all men then be saved by the Mediator, Jesus, as they are all condemned in Adam?

**A.** No; but those only who receive Him by a true faith; as it is written, John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

**Q. 19.** What is true faith?

**A.** It is a certain knowledge of God and of His promises, revealed to us in the gospel, and an hearty confidence that all my sins are forgiven me, for Christ's sake.

**I**N Chapter IV we learned that in and through the fall of Adam all men fell, since he was the father of us all and we all sinned in him as our federal head. In Chapter VI we learned about the mediator needed to escape the punishment involved in the fall, and to again be received into God's favor. The Mediator whom God graciously provided was stated to be Jesus Christ, in one person true God, and a real and righteous man, who brought about the required satisfaction, actual, complete, and personal.

But now the question arises: *for whom* has Christ become Mediator? Shall all men then be saved by Him as they are all condemned in Adam? Some have answered yes to this question, particularly those who hold Universalism, which teaches that ultimately all men will be saved through Christ. But our "Compendium" gives a decidedly negative reply. "No, but those only who receive him by a true faith," and John 3:16 is quoted in Answer 18. That means that the condemnation in Adam is not co-extensive with the salvation in Christ. The former is universal,

embracing all men. The latter is particular, including only "whosoever believeth in Him."

That brings us to the great subject of this lesson: *Faith*. The English word "faith" is of Latin origin. It is derived from the verb *fido*, "I trust." The Hebrew and Greek Bible words express the same idea. Our word "belief" is related in origin to the Dutch word *geloof*, and has in it the idea of loving consent. It will be seen that these conceptions are all included in true faith.

In our "Compendium" true faith is defined as "a certain *knowledge* of God and his promises revealed to us in the Gospel, and a hearty *confidence* that all my sins are forgiven me for Christ's sake." Many speak of a third element, following knowledge and preceding confidence, called *assent*, by which is meant a hearty consent to be saved by Jesus and on His terms. This element is named in the definition which the *Larger Catechism* gives of "Justifying Faith:"—"a saving grace wrought in the heart of a sinner, by the Spirit and Word of God; whereby he, being convinced of his sin and misery, and of the disability in himself and all other creatures to recover him out of his lost condition, not only *assenteth* to the truth of the promise of the Gospel, but receiveth and resteth upon Christ and His righteousness therein held forth, for pardon of sin, and for the accepting and accounting of his person righteous in the sight of God for salvation" (Question 72.)

This assent is usually reckoned to be a part of the knowledge of true faith, comprehended in its certainty, as explained below.

This *knowledge* has to do with the *mind*. In God's people this becomes illumined, as Paul states of the Ephesian believers: "the eyes of your understanding being enlightened" (Eph. 1:18). Ps. 19:8: "The commandment of Jehovah is pure, enlightening the eyes." With many believers this enlightening is a slow and gradual process. With some it is a more or less sudden experience. It differs also in degree. Some have more and deeper insight into these things than others. We may well pray as the



Psalmist: "Open thou mine eyes" (Psalm 119:8), and heed the advice of Rev. 3:18: "I counsel thee . . . to buy of me . . . eyesalve to anoint thine eyes that thou mayest see."

This knowledge of true faith is called "certain." That means positive and sure. It is such because taught by the Holy Spirit. 1 John 2:20: "And ye have the anointing from the Holy One, and ye know all things." While this knowledge of true faith includes, as the *Larger Catechism* stated, conviction about our sin and misery and disability in ourselves to recover us out of our lost condition, its chief object is, as our "Compendium" explains it: God, and His promises revealed to us in the *Gospel*—the tiding of "good news." These promises are enumerated in the Apostles' Creed, Chapter VIII. Of these promises, the Lord Jesus as our Mediator and Savior, is the very heart.

The Bible is plain as to this object of true faith's knowledge. John 17:3: "And this is life eternal, that they should know Thee, the only true God, and him whom Thou didst send, even Jesus Christ." 1 John 5:20: "And we know that the Son of God is come and hath given us an understanding, that we know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ." 2 Cor. 1:20: "For all the promises of God in him [the Son of God, Jesus Christ] are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us."

The *confidence* of true faith is its second element, as mentioned in the "Compendium." It has to do with the *heart*. 1 Tim. 4:10: "We trust in the living God." Eph. 3:12: "In whom [Christ Jesus our Lord], we have boldness and access in confidence through our faith in Him." Without this trust, true faith is not complete in its action. As the *Larger Catechism*, quoted above, states, "it receiveth, and resteth upon, Christ and His righteousness." This trust is called "an *heartly* confidence." It dwells in the heart, the center of our soul-life, and its proceeds from it. It is sincere, leading to full and unreserved surrender to the Savior, relying upon Him in life and in death, as the One in whom, as we quoted above, God's promises are

yea and amen, and who gave assurance: "and him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). That such trust embraces the assent already alluded to, is self-evident. Heb. 11:6: "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him."

This confidence is not equally strong in all true believers, as little as the knowledge of saving faith is equally clear and broad and deep in all. Different causes may hinder it in its development. Rom. 14:1 speaks of people "weak in faith." Paul speaks of the *growth* of the faith of the Corinthian believers (2 Cor. 10:15). May we heed Heb. 10:22, 23: "Let us draw near with a true heart in the fulness of faith . . . let us hold fast the confession of our hope that it waver not; for he is faithful that promised."

This true faith is wrought by the Holy Spirit, through the Word of God. 1 Cor. 12:3: "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost." Eph. 2:8: "For by grace have ye been saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." "Faith is, passively, a gift of God, and actively, a deed of men." We should also bear in mind the distinction of faith in its germ or root, as implanted in regeneration, and in its development into action.

May we all experience saving faith in its blessed operations! Its *necessity* is absolute for us, since "without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto Him" (Heb. 11:6). May we also be diligent as to our prayerful use of the means of grace! Romans 10:17: "So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ."

And we should be the more attentive and concerned about this matter of faith because there is more than one *kind* of belief. Besides what the "Compendium" calls true faith—also called "saving" because leading to salvation, and "justifying" as comprehending our justification (Chapter XVIII),—there are three other kinds of faith. They are usually called: historical, miraculous, and temporary. *Historical* faith is a bare assent to the truth, necessary but not sufficient, as we see in the case of King

Agrippa (Acts 26:27). Even the devils have it, and they tremble (James 2:19). Historical faith does not know what personal repentance means before God, nor personal appropriation of Christ as Redeemer. Nevertheless it has its value, since it furnishes information about Bible truth that becomes an asset unto service if applied to the heart. "Thou believest that God is one; thou doest well (James 2:19). But woe unto us if it remain faith without works, "dead in itself" (James 2:17), mere "head knowledge." Luke 12:47: "And that servant who knew his Lord's will and made not ready, nor did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes." May we as covenant people, trained in covenant ways, prayerfully consider if this perhaps apply to us!

*Miraculous* faith is a strong persuasion that a miracle may be performed by us or in us. The first type of persuasion is described in Matt. 7:22, 23, in our Lord's fearful: "I know you not," spoken to many who in His Name had done many mighty works. The second type is illustrated by the story of the ten lepers cured (Luke 17:17). Only one, a Samaritan, had miraculous faith, leading to a cure, accompanied by saving faith, bringing him back to Christ in gratitude.

*Temporary* faith is that of the one "sown upon the rocky places," that is "he that heareth the Word, and straightway with joy receiveth it; yet hath he not root in himself, but endureth for a while" (Matt. 13:20). This kind of faith is at times caused by artificial methods, as by some "revival" preachers.

What marks the essential difference between temporary and true faith is not simply the matter of endurance, for there doubtless are cases in which the first kind of belief lasts a long time, but rather this that there is no regeneration of the heart included, and therefore no godly sorrow for sin, nor absolute surrender to Christ. Let us therefore examine ourselves whether we be in the faith (2 Cor. 13:5).

## QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN WORK

- 1) What do the derivations of our English words "faith" and "belief" signify?
- 2) Which two elements are enumerated in our "Compendium" as constituting true faith?
- 3) What can you say about faith's assent?
- 4) Why do we speak of "certain" knowledge?
- 5) What is the confidence called "hearty"?
- 6) Which are the objects of true faith?
- 7) What is the nature and the value of historical faith?
- 8) What is meant by miraculous faith?
- 9) Describe temporary faith.
- 10) What is our duty regarding faith?

## CHAPTER VIII.

THE APOSTLES' CREED. THE EXISTENCE,  
ESSENCE, AND NAMES OF GOD

**Q. 20.** What is the sum of that which God has promised in the gospel, and commanded us to believe?

**A.** That is comprehended in the twelve articles of the Catholic Christian Faith, which are as follows:

**I.** I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth;

**II.** And in Jesus Christ, his only begotten Son, our Lord;

**III.** Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary;

**IV.** Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried, he descended into hell;

**V.** The third day he rose again from the dead;

**VI.** He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God, the Father Almighty;

**VII.** From thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

**VIII.** I believe in the Holy Ghost.

**IX.** I believe an holy Catholic church, the communion of saints;

**X.** The forgiveness of sins;

**XI.** The resurrection of the body;

**XII.** And the life everlasting.

**Q. 21.** When you profess to believe in God the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, do you mean three Gods thereby?

**A.** In no wise; for there is but one only true God.

**I**N THE previous chapter we learned about Faith in its two elements, knowledge and confidence. That knowledge was a knowledge of God, and of his promises revealed in the gospel. That confidence concerned forgive-



ness of sins for Christ's sake, the very heart of God's promises. Now the question arises: "What is the *sum* of that what God has promised us in the gospel and commanded us to believe?" And the answer is: "That is comprehended in the twelve articles of the Catholic Christian faith."

It is the Apostles' Creed that the present chapter discusses, and the Essence and Names of God as comprehended in its four opening words: "I believe in God."

As already stated in the first chapter of this book, the Apostles' Creed in its present form dates from about 500 A. D. But already long before this there was a somewhat similar Creed, said to go back to A. D. 140. The Roman Church claims that each of the Apostles of Christ, before they separated from one another, established the outlines of this Creed, and it asserts that especially Peter's influence in drawing it up appeared from the fact that the principles which are found in his addresses recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, are those which are traced in the Creed. The historic fact, however, is that slowly on these twelve articles grew out of the Baptism formula given by our Lord (Matt. 28:19). From time to time new clauses were added in order to combat various heresies as they arose. Thus the words, "Creator of heaven and earth," were added to meet the Manichean doctrine that the world was created by the principle of evil. The word "Catholic" was added to distinguish the Church from the sects around her, etc., etc. Still, because essentially the teachings of the Creed are those of Jesus' Apostles, the present name is a proper one. The Latin word for the Apostles' Creed is that of *Symbolum* or distinguishing mark (symbol) because in early days the recital of the Creed was the distinguishing mark of one who was allowed to receive adult baptism, and be recognized as a christian.

The Apostles' Creed is trinitarian in its arrangement. In its three parts we find the first one treating of God the Father and our creation; the second of God the Son and our redemption; the third part speaks of the Holy Ghost and our sanctification.

The twelve articles of the Creed form a chain whose

links are inseparably connected. You cannot take away one without destroying the unity of the whole. Some have found a comparison between its numbers and those of the twelve precious stones on the breastplate of the highpriest (Lev. 28:17-21), and the twelve loaves of shewbread (Lev. 24:6). May they at any rate be bound upon our heart and its truths shining in our lives!

While it is true that three divine Persons are successively named in the Creed, and consequently we profess to believe in "God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost," we do not mean that we believe in three Gods. "In no wise; for there is only one true God." Deut. 6:4: "Hear, O Israel, Jehovah our God is one Jehovah." 1 Cor. 8:4: "We know that no idol is anything in the world, and that there is no God but one." This differentiates Christians who are monotheists, that is, people believing in one God, from the heathen who are named polytheists, or believers in many gods, something seen not only in the story of Jonah (Jonah 1:5), but expressed repeatedly by Paul (Rom. 1:21-23). Let us pity those, who "professing themselves to be wise, became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man," like the old Greeks and Romans, and of "birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things," as the old Egyptians did. (Compare Exodus 8:26.)

The true God must be *known*. The knowledge of faith requires this. We cannot believe in anything we do not know. Without our knowledge of God and his promises it simply is impossible to appropriate the blessings of salvation. Now the question arises *wherein* the one true God must be known? And the answer is: In his Essence, Names, Attributes, Persons and Works. As stated above, in this chapter we only cover the first two of these. Following chapters are devoted to the remaining ones.

God's *Essence* pertains to God's *being* as such. And that is described as follows: "God is a personal spiritual Being of infinite perfection." Note each of these words. God is a *Being*, that means an Entity, One actually exist-

ing, and in this case existing as the Supreme and Divine Being.

God is a *personal* Being, that is, one who has the qualities of individuality, of mind, and self-consciousness, of will and self-determination, and of affections. God speaks of himself as "I" ("I am that I am," Ex. 3:14), betokening personality. Gen. 1:26; Dan. 4:35; Gen. 6:5, 6. (Compare Chapter X on the Personality of the Holy Spirit.)

God is a *spiritual* Being, that is to say He has no bodily form, as we human beings have such. Nor has He "parts" such as we have, no material form or substance. When the Bible speaks of God's eyes, ears, hands, etc., these expressions must be understood figuratively as referring to attributes or acts of God. The eyes, for instance, betoken His omniscience; His ears that He takes notice of us; His hands indicate his power. John 4:24: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." The great sin of the heathen has always been that they tried to make of God a material being. It was because of this that the Jews were strictly forbidden to make an image of God (Ex. 20:4). God cannot be seen by any man, "dwelling in light unapproachable, whom no man hath seen or can see" (1 Tim. 6:16). In Christ, however, He has sufficiently revealed Himself. While: "No man hath seen God at any time—the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John 1:18). "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9).

This God, a personal, and spiritual Being, is one of "*infinite perfection*." Perfection indicates faultless and complete excellency, in God supreme as well as faultless and complete. Infinite is expressive of being limitless, without bounds. This perfection of God is expressed in his various *attributes* (Chapter IX). That this personal spiritual Being exists in a threefold personality, is explained in Chapter X on the Holy Trinity.

What we gave here is, of course, not an adequate definition of what God is as to His essence. No one can give this. Ps. 145:31: "Great is Jehovah, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable." Job 11:

7, 8: "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is high as heaven, what canst thou do?" Let us thank God, however, that we know as much of Him as He graciously revealed of Himself in nature and in Scripture.

Much of that revelation of God's Being is made known to us in His *Names*. They reveal so much of His perfections that we should study them carefully. The most significant of these Names are those of God, Jehovah, and Father. The name Jehovah is commonly translated LORD. It is known particularly as God's Covenant Name, and signifies that God is the *really existing* One, the "I Am," over against whom all idols are non-existent and vanities. Ex. 3:13, 14: "And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? What shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM." Jehovah therefore is expressive of God's self-existence. The name also expresses His unchangeableness, and His faithfulness included in this. He is the "I AM," eternally the same, past, present, future. And therefore unchangeably faithful. "For I, Jehovah, change not, therefore ye, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed" (Mal. 3:6).

Other Old Testament names of God are "Elohim," usually translated as "God"; Elohim signifies, "the one to be feared." "El," found in several combinations, indicates "the Strong One;" "Adonai," master; "Eljon," exalted; "El-shaddai," God Almighty. The name "Lord of Sabaoth," found in the New Testament (Rom. 9:29; James 5:4), is the same as "Lord of hosts" in the Old Testament (Psalm 84:1).

In the New Testament our blessed Lord repeatedly spoke of God as *Father*, a name full of precious meaning because it signifies not alone that we owe our life to Him, but also may rely on the loving care of a heavenly Father, as appealed to in the Lord's Prayer, to supply all essential needs for body and soul, for time and eternity (Matt. 6:9; Ps. 103:3; Isa. 63:16; 64:8; Mal. 1:6; Matt. 7:11;

Gal. 4:5, 6). Let us praise God for revealing so much of Himself as to His Essence and Names and daily invoke His blessings upon us.

### QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN WORK

- 1) What can you say about the origin of the Apostles' Creed?
- 2) Which are the main divisions of it?
- 3) How can you prove that God is One?
- 4) Wherein must this one God be known?
- 5) What can you say about God's Essence?
- 6) What do we mean by a Person?
- 7) How many such terms as God's eyes, ears and hands can you find in the Bible?
- 8) What do we mean by speaking of God as a Being of "infinite perfection"?
- 9) Enumerate and give the meaning of some O. T. names for God.
- 10) What can you say about the name "Father" applied to God?



## CHAPTER IX

## THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

BESIDES God's Essence and Names we are to study his Attributes. They are the perfections of his Being made known to us. The word "attribute" originally denotes something allotted. It has come to mean an inherent quality or characteristic. The Dutch equivalent, "eigenschap," expresses something which belongs or appertains to something as a quality. While in God all is one infinite perfection, an absolute unity, He manifests this in various ways, like the one white light, after passing through a prism, shows the various colors of the rainbow. For the sake of an orderly presentation of God's attributes or perfections made known to us, we speak of two classes of them: *incommunicable* and *communicable*. The incommunicable attributes are those of which no likeness has been or could be imparted to us human beings. The communicable ones are perfections of which there is some semblance in man. God's *incommunicable* attributes are His independency, simplicity, eternity, omnipresence, and immutability.

God's *independency* expresses His self-existence and self-sufficiency. He depends on nothing or no one. But on the contrary, the entire universe depends on Him. "God neither has nor demands any cause or reason outside of Himself. He alone exists necessarily, of Himself and for Himself." Acts 17:25: "Neither is He served by man's hands, as though He needed anything, seeing He Himself giveth to all life, breath and all things." Therein is also comprehended His sovereignty, named at the end of this chapter.

The *simplicity* of God denotes that there are no component parts in Him, while we are complex, composed of body and soul, etc. 1 John 1:5: "God is a light, and in Him is no darkness at all." Indivisibility is expressive of this simplicity.

God's *eternity* signifies that He is unlimited in duration, without beginning, without continuance of time, existing above time, and without end. Time is man's measure of duration, not God's, with whom there is an everlasting present. Psalm 90:2: "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God." 2 Peter 3:8: "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

By God's *omnipresence* we understand His everywhere-ness. Jer. 23:24: "Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith Jehovah?" He is the *immanent* God, present at every point of space, and at the same time *transcendent*, that is, distinct from it, before and above it, and independent of it. "The world might be blotted out, but God would exist the same that He is now." In regard to space we speak of God's *immensity*, 2 Chron. 6:18: "The heaven of heavens cannot contain thee."

God's *immutability* denotes His unchangeableness. James 1:17: "With whom there is no variation or shadow cast by turning." He may change in His *dealings* with the world, and in that sense we take a text like Gen. 6:6: "It repenteth Jehovah that He had made men on the earth," but in his divine Being He remains unchanged. Mal. 3:6: "I, Jehovah, change not."

Besides these incommunicable attributes, God's perfections include His *communicable* attributes: the intelligence and power of God and his will. In our human personality we discover semblances to these. God's *intelligence*, sometimes called His *knowledge*, is all-embracing, or omniscient, and likewise eternal. Acts 15:18: "Known unto God are all his works, from the beginning of the world." Psalm 147:5: "His understanding is infinite." As manifested in his works, we speak of God's *wisdom*. Romans 11:33, 34: "Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! . . . For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been His counsellor?"

God's *power* is that of all-power or omnipotence. Matt. 19:26: "With God all things are possible." God's power is

inexhaustible, and perfect in its mode of action. Isa. 40: 28: "The everlasting God . . . fainteth not, neither is weary."

The *will* of God is His faculty or power of self-determination. It is free and sovereign, consistent with His own divine nature. We distinguish between the will of God's *decree*, and the will of His *command*. The first is named his secret and the second his revealed will. Deut. 29:29: "The secret things belong unto Jehovah, our God, but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of His law." The will of God's decree or His secret will is His eternal purpose, according to which He effects all things in time. Eph. 1:11: "Having been foreordained according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His will." What this fore-ordination is, is explained in Chapter XVII.

The will of God's command, or His revealed will, is that which He prescribes in His Word as a rule and unto which He demands obedience, as already named in the text quoted, Deut. 29:29.

Psalms 119:4, 5: "Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently. O, that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes." Romans 12:2: "And be ye not fashioned according to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

To God's attribute of *will* belong his holiness, truth, justice, and goodness, as the manifestations and ways of expressing his will. God's *holiness* indicates that He is separate from everything else, especially from sin, and devoted to Himself as the highest good. Isa. 6:3: "Holy, holy, holy is Jehovah of hosts." God's *truth* is His self-consistency, the agreement of His presentations with reality. In a supernatural sense God's truth indicates that He is the only existing God, "Jehovah, the true God" (Jer. 10:11). Before Him the idols are naught. In a moral sense He reveals Himself as He really is—"the living God" (Jer. 10:11), who constructed the mind of His image-bearers capable of reacting on God's presentations of

Himself, to obtain adequate conceptions of God. It also embraces God's *faithfulness* regarding His promises. 2 Tim 2:13: "He abideth faithful, for He cannot deny Himself."

God's *justice* is the absolute righteousness of his Being. God is exactly just; essentially and necessarily righteous. He is both the ground and the standard of right. What God is, is right, and we ought to do right because of what God is. Psalm 119:137: "Righteous art thou, O Jehovah, and upright are thy judgments." This righteousness or justice is manifested in giving righteous laws, and impartially executing them, in giving proper rewards, and in demanding and executing punishment of all transgression of or want of conformity to His laws. God's *wrath* is subsumed under His justice. Psalm 97:2: "Righteousness and justice are the habitations of His throne." In the testimony of our own conscience, and especially in the suffering of Christ in the sinner's stead, God's righteousness was manifested.

God's *goodness* is the perfection of God's Being whereby He regards Himself with infinite complacency and deals kindly with all His sentient creatures. God's very essence is good, even as He is the efficient exemplary and final cause of all good. In dealing with these creatures God reveals this goodness in various ways. God's goodness is shown in *love* toward all His creatures in general, and toward His people in particular. Ps. 36:7: "How precious is thy loving kindness, O God, and the children of men take refuge under the shadow of thy wings." Psalm 106:4: "Remember me, O Jehovah, with the favor that thou bearest unto thy people; Oh visit me with thy salvation." Compare John 3:16.

God's *grace* is His goodness bestowed of His own free will, and as undeserved and forfeited favor. We distinguish between common grace (Chapter XVII), and special grace toward God's own. The *mercy* of the Lord is His goodness shown to the miserable, in feeling and providing for them. It includes His pity and compassion. Ps. 25:6: "Remember, O Jehovah, thy tender mercies and thy loving kindness, for they have been ever of old." God's *patience*

is manifested in sparing the impenitent, and is postponing punishment. It is at times called the Lord's "long-suffering." 2 Peter 3:9: "The Lord . . . is long-suffering to you-ward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

The prerogative arising out of all these perfections is God's *sovereignty*, free and supreme, whereby: "He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth" (Daniel 4:35).

As we think of these attributes of our God, may we appreciate it that He revealed Himself as God, "merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness and truth" (Ex. 34:6), and meditate on them reverently and believingly.

### QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN WORK

- 1) What do you understand by God's attributes?
- 2) Why do we call some of God's attributes incommunicable?
- 3) Why do we call others communicable?
- 4) Name the incommunicable attributes.
- 5) Name the communicable attributes.
- 6) What is meant by God's goodness?
- 7) What is God's love? Prove it from the Bible.
- 8) What is God's grace? Prove it from the Bible.
- 9) What is God's mercy? Prove it from the Bible.
- 10) What is God's patience? Prove it from the Bible.



## CHAPTER X

## THE HOLY TRINITY

**Q. 22. Why do you then name three, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost?**

**A. Because God hath so revealed himself in his Word, that these three distinct Persons, are the only one and true God, and we also are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.**

**I**N Chapter VIII the *Compendium* stated that when we professed to believe in God the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, we did not mean three Gods thereby, for there is only one true God, of whose Essence, Names, and Attributes the next chapters treated. Harking back to the statement of Question 21, we find in Question 22, placed above this Chapter, why we then named three, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. That leads us to the doctrine of the *Holy Trinity*, an exceedingly important part of divine truth, of basic value to the whole christian faith, as already shown by the fact that the Apostles' Creed is built on it. The answer to Question 22 is that we name three "because God hath so revealed himself in his Word, that these three distinct persons are the only one and true God, and we also are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

The Trinity is a mystery far exceeding human comprehension. We would not have discovered it, apart from the Bible. Even after it has been revealed we cannot fathom it. For that matter, a being whom we could fathom with our finite mind would not be divine and entitled to our worship.

The word "Trinity" stands for tri-unity, three-in-one, like the Dutch word "Drie-eenheid." The doctrine of the holy Trinity teaches: "There are three Persons in the God-head, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and these

three are one true, eternal God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory; although distinguished by their personal properties." (*Larger Catechism*, Question 9.)

In the nature of the case there can be only one God, because He is the greatest Being conceivable, and only one can be *the greatest*.

The Old Testament was very clear in stating that there was but one supreme divine Being. Deut. 6:4: "Hear, O Israel: Jehovah our God is one Jehovah."

However, it is not inconceivable that the Godhead should exist in more than one Personality, each having the same divine nature and substance. And the fact is, that already in the opening verses of the Bible we find evidences of a plurality in this one Godhead, as shown by the use of the plural, Gen. 1:26, 27: "Let *us* make man," and Gen. 3: 22: "Behold the man is become as one of *us*." Still clearer became that mystery as Psalm 33:6 recorded: "By the *Word* of *Jehovah* were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the *Breath* of his mouth." Still clearer was Isa. 61:1: "The *Spirit* of the *Lord* Jehovah is upon *Me*,"—quoted by our Lord with application to Himself (Luke 4: 18-21). Compare Isa. 63:9, 10.

But the full revelation came during the New Testament dispensation, proving that there was a Trinity in the divine unity and unity in the Trinity. Luke 1:35: "The *Holy Ghost* shall come upon thee (Mary), and the power of the *Most High* shall overshadow thee; wherefore also the holy thing which is begotten shall be called the *Son of God*." When our Lord was baptized (Luke 3:21, 22), "the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form, as a dove, upon Him, and a voice came out of heaven: Thou art my beloved Son." The formula, given by Jesus Himself, commanded baptizing "into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19), one Name, but three Persons. That the Apostles heartily accepted this mystery is shown by Paul's benediction: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (2 Cor. 13:14)—and by Peter's mention of "the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprink-

ling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:2). (Compare 1 John 5:7.) In other words, it was revealed that while God is one in Essence, each one possessing all the divine attributes, He exists in three Persons, each one possessing distinct personal *properties*.

The Father's personal property is that He, as Father, exists of Himself. John 5:26: "For as the Father hath life in Himself." The personal property of the Son is that He is the begotten of the Father, God's only begotten Son, (John 1:14). Ps. 2:7: "Jehovah saith unto Me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten Thee." Heb. 1:5, 6; John 5:26. (Compare Chapter XI on "Generation.") The Holy Spirit's personal property is that He proceeds from the Father and the Son, from all eternity. This procession has been defined as an eternal and necessary act of the Father and the Son, wherein their whole identical divine essence, without alienation, division, or change, is communicated to the Holy Ghost. (A. A. HODGE.)

John 15:26: "Even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father;" "the Spirit of the Son" (Gal. 4:6). This procession, it should be observed, is never reversed in Holy Writ. While these three Persons are equal as to divine essence (co-essential) and equally eternal (co-eternal) and equal as to attributes and glory, as well as equally worthy of the same adoration, obedience and love, we say that in *order of existence*, the Father is the first Person of the Holy Trinity, the Son the second, and the Holy Spirit the third Person. In the order of *works* we find the Father originating, the Son redeeming, the Holy Spirit sanctifying. Romans 11:36: "For of Him and through Him and unto Him are all things."

In the face of denials that the Christ is God, we know that He truly is a divine Person, equal in eternity, power, and glory unto the Father and the Holy Spirit, from the fact that divine names, attributes, works, and honor are ascribed to Him. Divine *names*: Jer. 23:6: "And this is the Name whereby He shall be called, the LORD our righteousness." "The Word was God" (John 1:1). Divine *attributes*: Isa 9:6: "The mighty God, the everlasting Father." John 2:24: "He knew all men." Divine *works*:

Coll. 1:16: "For by Him were all things created." Divine honors: Baptism in the name of the Son (Matt. 28:19), and the Apostolic benediction: "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ." That the Holy Spirit is God is shown in the same way (Chapter XV).

We reject the assertions of those who say that the Holy Spirit is merely a divine influence or power, and not a *Person*, like the Father and the Son. As already stated in Chapter VIII, a person denotes individuality, an "Ego" with mind, will, and affections. Such distinctly *personal* attributes are ascribed to the Holy Ghost.

Acts 13:2: "The Holy Spirit said, separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them."

John 14:26: "The Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my Name, He shall teach you all things." "Spirit of counsel" (Isa. 11:2).

1 Cor. 2:10: "For the Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God." "Spirit of knowledge" (Isa. 11:2).

1 Cor. 12:11: "But all these things worketh one and the same Spirit, dividing to each one severally as He wills."

Ps. 143:10: "Thy Spirit is good; lead me in the land of uprightness." Gal. 5:22: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness."

The doctrine of the Holy Trinity, although one of the deepest mysteries of our Christian faith, is therefore entirely biblical. It is also of supreme importance for us since we need each of the divine Persons: the Father to draw, the Son to save, the Spirit to sanctify us. (John 6:44; Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 1:2.)

Let us bear in mind also that the Holy Trinity is a mystery to be believed, not explained. But what is *above* reason, is not *contrary* to reason. This blessed doctrine involves no contradiction, though it is above reason or supernatural. The *unity* of God relates to his *nature* and to his nature only, while the *plurality* relates to the divine *Persons* and to them only. Faith in the Holy Trinity is necessary to salvation. It runs through the entire plan of salvation. Prayerful study of the Word, and communion with God makes this a very precious doctrine to all true

believers. It is also the great differentiating truth as we think of the "false religions" of pagans and others. In the realm of nature some have found parallels illustrating the Trinity. Can you name some? But all of these are inadequate to fully parallel the mystery. May we accept in faith and adore heartily the "merciful and mighty, God in three Persons, blessed Trinity."

### QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN WORK

- 1) How would you describe what we mean by the holy Trinity?
- 2) Which Old Testament texts suggest the holy Trinity?
- 3) In which N. T. texts is the holy Trinity mentioned the plainest?
- 4) Wherein are the three Persons one and wherein three?
- 5) What is the personal property of the Father?
- 6) What is the personal property of the Son of God?
- 7) What is the personal property of the Holy Spirit?
- 8) How do we prove the Godhead of the Son?
- 9) How do we prove the personality of the Holy Ghost?
- 10) Why is this doctrine so supremely important?



## CHAPTER XI.

## CREATION AND PROVIDENCE

**Q. 23.** What believest thou, when thou sayest, "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth"?

**A.** That the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who of nothing made heaven and earth, and still upholds them by his providence, is my God and Father, for Christ His Son's sake.

**W**E have so far studied, in Chapters VIII to X, God in His Essence, Names, Attributes, and Persons. We now come to the subject of God's *works*. And the two to be considered in this chapter are those of Creation and Providence, attributed especially to the first Person of the Holy Trinity, God the Father, about whom we already said that He is the originating Cause of things.

In answer to Question 23, asking what we believe when we say in the Apostles' Creed: "I believe in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth?" the reply is that the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, *made heaven and earth*.

That the first Person of the Holy Trinity is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, we studied in the previous chapter. He is such by what is called "*generation*," which has been defined as "the eternal, personal act of the Father, generating the Person (not the essence) of the Son, by communicating to Him the whole indivisible substance of the Godhead, without division, alienation or change, so that the Son is the express image of the Father's Person." Heb. 1:3: "Who being the effulgence of His glory, and the very image of His substance." Ps. 2:7: "I will tell of the decree: Jehovah said unto Me: Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee." This is one of the deep mysteries of Holy Writ, never to be fathomed, but plainly revealed and therefore heartily to be believed.

Now, this God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, is the *Maker* of heaven and earth. He is such by what is called "*creation*," which is the work of the Father as

primal Cause, through the Son as the Word (John 1:10), and the Holy Spirit (Ps. 33:6), so that in the complete sense creation was the work of the triune God.

To create is to bring into existence by the act of an omnipotent will. Rev. 4:11: "Thou didst create all things, and because of thy will they were, and were created."

We distinguish between two kinds of creation. The first is *immediate* creation, or the *origination* of the material, that is, the principles and causes and substance of all things. This is meant by the phrase "of nothing." It is related in Gen. 1:1: "In the beginning God created heaven and earth." The second kind of creation is *mediate*, or the origination of the different *forms* of things, especially of different species of living beings, out of the already created material. It is referred to in Gen. 1:2-31, telling how the earth was "waste and void," and how the Lord successively created light, the firmament, the earth and the seas, and then herbs and trees and animals, and finally, on the sixth day, man. The first kind of creation was instantaneous, and due exclusively to the act of God's omnipotent will. The second kind of creation was gradual and the result of God's coöperating with and making use of what He already had called into existence.

God made the world and the fulness thereof in systematic order in six days, as related in the first chapter of Genesis already briefly outlined—a marvelous work indeed, as we referred to in Chapter I of this book. This whole creation was called "very good." That means there was nothing evil in the world as God made it, and every being and thing in it was perfectly fitted to reach its *purpose*, and that was that God might reveal Himself and be glorified. Prov. 16:4: "The LORD hath made all things for Himself." (Rev. 4:11.)

The *chief creatures* which God made were men, made in His image, and angels, some of whom fell and became devils. (Compare Chapters III and IV.) Of the *angels* it is assumed that they were created on the first day when God made the heavens. "Angel" means "messenger." The Bible calls angels: "ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation" (Heb. 1:14).

In the book of Revelation we find angels around the throne of God (Rev. 5:11). There are archangels and other angels. It is claimed that the Bible mentions nine different divisions or groups of angels. How many of them can you mention? Some of these spirits are called cherubim and others seraphim (Isa. 6:2).

As already noted in Chapter IV, some angels fell. Their head is Satan, the "prince of the devils." We infer from Bible statements that they fell because of pride, and discontent with their station (John 8:44; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6; 1 Tim. 3:6). *How* they could fall is a mystery, having been created like the rest, "very good." The possibility of their fall has been sought in their free will and changeability. (Compare Isa. 14:12 and Ez. 28.)

Of *man* the Bible teaches that he consists of body and soul. With his body he is as it were linked to the earth. His soul or spirit (both names refer to the same spiritual entity), is linking him to heaven and its inhabitants. The human soul has three faculties: mind, feeling, and will. These are united in his personality, his "ego," which reveals itself in our consciousness, our "I." Man also has a *conscience*, God's "*witness*" within us, accusing or excusing (compare Chapter I). Our *heart* is sometimes represented in the Bible as the center of our soul, whence "are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23), and the subject of renewing grace in regeneration (Chapter XV). Man's soul is *immortal*, created for all eternity (Matt. 10:28). That fact is also included in what was related in Chapter V about the eternal punishment of sin. (For detailed discussion of the doctrine of angels, man, and the immortality of the human soul, see Chapter XI, §1, of our *Compendium Explained*.)

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It might be assumed that since man and angels fell into such grievous sin as involved in the Fall, the Lord would have ceased to care for His creation, ruined as it had been through wilful disobedience. But the Bible reveals a long-suffering God of grace. And consequently our *Compendium* does not only mention that the eternal God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, *made* heaven

and earth, but likewise that He "still upholds them by His *Providence*."

Providence is the second work therefore of our God. It is, as noted above, ascribed to the Father, although here, as in creation, the first Person, as the Primal Cause does not work apart from the Son and the Holy Spirit. Heb. 1:3 teaches us that the Son is "upholding all things by the Word of His power," and in Ps. 104:30 we read: "Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created; and thou renewest the face of the ground." So we may say that in the fullest sense Providence as well as Creation is the work of the triune God.

What is meant by *Providence*? It signifies that God upholds the world and its fulness and governs them to a certain determinate end. 1 Chron. 29:12: "Both riches and honor come of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thy hand is power and might; and in thy hand it is to make great and to give strength unto all." We usually distinguish three parts in Providence: preservation, co-operation, and government. *Preservation* indicates that God, who called the world and its fulness into being, continues to sustain or uphold it as a whole and in all its parts, properties, and powers. He also sustains the life of His living creatures. All depends upon God for continuance in being as well as for creation. Some created things are preserved immediately, that is, without means, such as the stars in their courses; others mediately, like men and animals and plants, namely, through food. Some are preserved in themselves, as the earth, the sun, moon, and stars; of others the genera and species are continued, like those of men, animals, and plants. Ps. 104:27-30: "These all wait for Thee, that Thou mayest give them their food in due season. Thou givest unto them, and they gather; Thou openest Thy hand, they are satisfied with good. Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled; Thou takest away their breath and they die, and return to the dust."

*Coöperation* (literally meaning: "working together"), denotes the almighty and omnipresent power of God whereby He works with and in all the movements and workings of His creatures. They are depending on God

not alone for existence, but also for activity. Acts 17:28: "For in Him we live, and move, and have our being." This coöperation does not mean the destruction of personal initiative, nor does it make God responsible for the sinfulness of the actions involved. While we know that God is the great Primal Cause, we believe in the reality of second causes and in human responsibility as well.

*Government*, the third part of Providence, signifies that God rules and overrules all activity and events in the universe to a certain determinate end—that end His own glory (Prov. 16:4), and the working out of His eternal purpose (Chapter XVII). It includes the working together for good of all things to them that love God and are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).

We speak of a *general* Providence regarding all God's creation; a *special* Providence regarding His rational creatures, and a *particular* Providence in caring for His own.

The *value* of this work of God is great, since the Lord "is good to all and His tender mercies are over all His works" (Ps. 145:9). Particularly God's people ought to value it, leading them to be patient in adversity, thankful in prosperity, and in all things to trust the faithful God and Father of their Lord Jesus Christ.

Belief in the doctrine should also keep us from ascribing things or events to fate, fortune, luck, or chance. We should also consider that Providence must not be construed in such a way that man's freedom of choice, (according to his own inclinations), is destroyed, and human responsibility ceases. God's operations are congruous with the nature of His creatures and with all the laws of their action. We ought also to carefully consider that Providence does not render the use of *means* unnecessary. The Lord makes use of them to carry out His purpose, as we already noted in the statement concerning "mediate" creation. (Compare Prov. 24:30-34; Acts 27:22-31.)

*Miracles* are events wrought by the special and unusual working of God's power, and which cannot be explained by the ordinary workings of nature. Examples are seen in the cases of the plagues in Egypt (Ex. 7:9); the turning of water into wine (John 4:54), and the cure of the



impotent man at the temple door (Acts 3:2 and Acts 4:16) —Bible passages which mention the very word "miracle," which is derived from a Latin word signifying "wonderful." Miracles reveal God as standing above the ordinary operations of His law, able to suspend or reverse their workings. The illustration may be used of God as a great Engineer, not alone designing and building his engine, starting it up and running it forward, but able to stop it or run it backward at His pleasure.

Miracles were wrought especially at *critical times* in the history of God's Kingdom, as in the days of Moses, and Elijah, and especially during the ministry of our Lord and His apostles. Their purpose was to authenticate the commission and message of those whom God employed as his spokesmen in such times. They ceased when the crisis was past. God never works miracles unnecessarily.

May all of us be able to confess, as in the answer to Question 23, that the eternal Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God of creation and providence, "is my God and Father, for Christ, His Son's sake." While God may be called "Father" in a *general* sense, as based on creation (1 Cor. 8:6 and Heb. 12:9), and in a *theocratic* sense of Israel (Deut. 32:6 and Isa. 63:16), He is Father in a *saving* sense only of those who believe in Christ (Matt. 6:4; Gal. 3:26. How He becomes that, succeeding chapters show.

### QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN WORK

- 1) Define what we mean by "creation."
- 2) What is the difference between immediate and mediate creation?
- 3) What can you say about angels?
- 4) What can you say as to man and the faculties of his soul?
- 5) Why do we believe in the immortality of the soul?
- 6) What is meant by preservation?
- 7) What is the meaning of co-operation?
- 8) What is meant by "government" as a part of Providence?
- 9) What are miracles and why were they wrought?
- 10) In how many respects may God be called Father, and what should be our great personal concern about this?

## CHAPTER XII

THE NATURES OF THE DIVINE MEDIATOR:  
DIVINE AND HUMAN

- Q. 24. What believest thou when thou sayest, "And in Jesus Christ his only begotten Son, our Lord?"
- A. That Jesus Christ is the eternal and only Son of the Father, co-essential with God the Father, and the Holy Ghost.
- Q. 25. Do you not believe that he also became man?
- A. Yes; for he was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary.
- Q. 26. Is his Godhead then changed into humanity?
- A. No; for the Godhead is immutable.
- Q. 27. How is he then become man?
- A. By assuming the human nature into a personal union with his divine.
- Q. 28. Did he then bring his human nature from heaven?
- A. No; but he took it on him of the Virgin Mary, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, and is thus become like unto his brethren in all things, sin excepted. Heb. 2:17 and 4:15.

WE shall now discuss the doctrines of which the second Person of the Holy Trinity is the center.

These doctrines are of great importance, covering as they do the natures, names, offices, and states of the Mediator (Chapters XII, XIII, and XIV). Lesson XII discusses our Lord's *natures*.

The Mediator has two natures: the one divine, as that of the Second Person of the Trinity; the other human, as conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary. That the second Person is *divine*, we already discussed in Chapter X, which showed that divine names, attributes, works and honor are ascribed to Him, so that we have every reason to believe that He is equal in eternity, power, and glory with the Father and the Holy Ghost. This fact

is also very evident when we notice texts speaking of Him literally as God, the Son of God, mighty God, Lord of glory, etc.

John 1:1: "The Word was God."

John 3:16: "His only begotten Son."

Isa. 9:6: "The mighty God."

1 Cor. 2:8: "The Lord of glory."

Titus 2:13: "Looking for the blessed hope and appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ."

In answer to the question what we believe when we say in the Apostles' Creed: "And in Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, our Lord?", the answer is: "That Jesus Christ is the eternal and only Son of the Father, co-essential with God the Father and the Holy Ghost." We saw in Chapter XI that this is due to what is called *generation*. John 1:18: "The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared Him." John 5:26: "For as the Father hath life in Himself, even so gave He to the Son also to have life in Himself." Micah 5:2: "Whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting."

It was the second Person of the Holy Trinity who in the fulness of time "became man," as the *Compendium* states. John 1:14: "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth." This becoming man is called the *incarnation* of the Son of God, as He "was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary." This "Virgin Birth" of our Lord is a well-established as well as a highly important doctrine. We find it foretold already in Gen. 3:15, where the coming Redeemer was called the *seed of the woman*, and, by inference, not of the man, as usual among mankind. Isa. 7:14: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel," a prophecy declared to refer to Christ in Matt. 1:23. Micah 5:2, speaking of our Savior's birth in Bethlehem, states that his "goings forth are from of old, from everlasting," something which could not be true if our Lord were conceived and born as an ordinary child. Matt. 1:18, speaking of Mary, betrothed to Joseph, states: "Before they came together she was found with

child of the Holy Spirit." Matt. 1:20: "That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit."

How the incarnation took place is related in Luke 1:35, in the words of the angel Gabriel to Mary: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: wherefore also the holy thing which is begotten shall be called the Son of God."

Other New Testament statements clearly assume the extraordinary birth of our Lord. John 1:14 tells us "the Word was *made* flesh." In Romans 8:3 Paul speaks of Jesus being made "in the likeness of sinful flesh." But His was not sinful flesh in reality. He was sinless, as Adam before the fall. That would not and could not have been the case if He had been like us in every way, as to his birth and life.

This same unusual character of the birth of Christ is shown in Gal. 4:4: "But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, *made of a woman*." That also applies to Heb. 2:16: "But He *took* on him the seed of Abraham." Heb. 10:5: "A body thou hast *prepared me*." Not to mention any more, we quote 1 Tim. 3:16: "And without controversy" (that is to say, without question) "great is the mystery of godliness: He who was manifested in the human flesh."

Throughout the history of the Church the Virgin Birth was accepted by all, except a few pronounced heretics like Cerinthus. This doctrine is well-established therefore, as much as any other Bible doctrine. And it is highly *important* as well. To deny it means denial of the reliability of the Word of God. It alone accounts for the unique, unexampled personality of Jesus and the stupendous issues of His life, teaching, and death. It is essential as to his sinlessness and Saviorhood. It explains satisfactorily how He was not included under the curse of the broken Covenant of works, which causes us all to be born with the guilt and taint of original sin.

If objectors state that the Bible itself calls our Lord the carpenter's son, etc., we answer that such terms can mean no more than that Joseph was Jesus' adoptive father. The Scripture cannot be broken in its testimony regarding

the Virgin Birth as a "mystery of godliness." Whatever expressions may *appear* to be contrary to it, must of necessity be explained in harmony with the plain revelation about it. The Deity and Saviorhood of our Christ and His miraculous conception, are so woven together as not to admit of separation.

The incarnation of the Person of the Son of God does not mean that His Godhead was *changed* into humanity. Christ *became* man, but *remained* God, as sharing in God's attribute of immutability set forth in Chapter IX.

"How then is He become man?" the *Compendium* asks. And the reply is: "By assuming the human nature into a personal union with His divine." Our Lord assumed a human nature, consisting of body and soul. But the Personality in it was and remained that of the Son of God. John 1:14: "And the *Word* became flesh and dwelt among us." These two natures of our Lord, divine and human, were united into His divine Personality, without mixture, change, division, or separation, as the Church defined it already in the ecumenical creed of Chalcedon, 451. Christ did not bring His human nature from heaven, as the Anabaptists have claimed, "but He took it on Him of the Virgin Mary, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, and is now like unto His brethren in all things, sin excepted" (Heb. 2:17; 4:15).

The *place* of His birth was Bethlehem, as foretold by Micah, in the prophecy we quoted above, about his "goings forth from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2), and as related in Luke 2:14.

Gal. 4:4: "But when the fulness of time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman." This "fulness" indicates the time God appointed for Christ's life and ministry, and for the birth of the Church in its New Testament form. The fact that there was at the time one great empire, Rome; world-wide use of one language, Greek; world-wide peace, the general feeling of the need of some superior revelation, coupled to a quite general expectation of an unusual event of some divine intervention on mankind's behalf, have been named to belong to this "fulness,"



preparing the world for a speedy spread of the Gospel message.

Our Lord was born at that appointed time, as the true *Messiah*, promised to God's Old Testament people. Everything which has been prophesied about Him was literally fulfilled. He was the seed of the woman, to bruise the head of the serpent (Gen. 3:15); in him all families of the earth were to be blessed (Gen. 12:3). He was of the tribe of Judah, whose scepter had not departed, nor the ruler's staff between his feet, till he came as the Shiloh, ("place of rest," or "rest-bringer"), unto whom should be the obedience of the peoples (Gen. 49:8-10). In him was fulfilled, as David's son, 2 Sam. 7:16: "Thy throne shall be established forever." We have already named Isa. 7:14 about His Virgin Birth, and Micah 5:2 of the place where He was to be born. As He entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, He was fulfilling the promise to Zion: "Behold, Thy king cometh unto thee; He is just, having salvation; lowly, riding upon an ass" (Zech. 9:9). Dan. 9:24 was fulfilled as to the time of the Messiah's death, and in Isa. 53 we find such a remarkable prophecy, most strikingly fulfilled in our Christ, that many a Jew was forced to concede Messiah's claims as that famous chapter became clear to them. May it also become clear to us that our Lord, as He assumed the human nature, to be our representative and Savior, is indeed the Christ of God, to be admired, sought, and served!

### QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN WORK

- 1) Wherein must the Mediator be known?
- 2) How many natures has our Lord?
- 3) Mention three texts proving that his was a divine nature.
- 4) Prove the Virgin Birth of our Savior.
- 5) Why should we hold this as an important doctrine?
- 6) What do we understand by Jesus' human nature?
- 7) What is the relation between the two natures?
- 8) Was Jesus like us in every way?
- 9) What is meant by the fulness of time? Gal. 4:4.
- 10) Give three plain proofs that Christ is indeed the promised Messiah.

## CHAPTER XIII

THE MEDIATOR'S NAMES AND OFFICES.  
THE ATONEMENT

**Q. 29. Why is he called Jesus, that is Savior?**

**A. Because he saves his people from their sins.**

**Q. 30. Is there no other Savior?**

**A. No; for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved, than in the name of Jesus. Acts 4:12.**

**Q. 31. Why is he called Christ, that is, anointed?**

**A. Because he was anointed with the Holy Ghost and ordained by God the Father, to be our chief Prophet, our only High Priest, and our eternal King.**

**B**ESIDES the Savior's natures we are to study His *names* and *offices*, as is done in the present Chapter.

The next one will discuss His states. The important subject of the atonement will also be taken up in this Chapter, falling as it does under one of the three offices of our Lord, namely, that of priest.

Two names are given in the *Compendium* (Questions 29 and 31), namely: Jesus and Christ, the first one being the personal or proper name of our Savior, and the second one His official name, that is, the one pertaining to His offices. He bears many more names and titles. Already Isaiah foretold in the prophecy about the Virgin Birth that His name would be "Immanuel," that is, "God is with us" (Isa. 7:14), and later on he prophesied about the Christ: "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." How many other names can you recall?

There is one name singled out, however, the name revealed by the angel to Joseph, as well as to Mary: "and thou shalt call His name JESUS, for it is He that shall save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21; Luke 1:31). That brings out the meaning of the name "Savior." The

name "Joshua," its Old Testament equivalent, literally signifies, "Jehovah is salvation" (Num. 13:16).

"Jesus" expresses the great *purpose* of the incarnation of our Lord: to save His people. To save means to deliver from the greatest evil, and to make partaker of the highest good. The greatest evil is sin, with its guilt and stain and power, and its punishment. The highest good is salvation, with its restoration here and hereafter to communion with God, as included in all the "chain" of salvation's blessings, from regeneration to glorification. "Save" also suggests the element of being rescued from grave danger—that of the loss of our soul (Matt. 16:26).

There is no other Savior, for there is "not any other name under heaven that is given among men, wherein we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). John 14:6: "I am the way, and the truth and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me."

In Chapter VI we learned already that neither angels nor saints could be our mediator. Neither can good works save us (Chapter XVIII). As to "salvation by character," a popular phrase with some people, such also is an impossible thing, since no one can satisfy a holy God with it. No one is nor can be saved *by* character. God's people are saved *unto* character, as a part of their sanctification, but that is a *result* of their having been saved, and not the *ground* upon which they are redeemed. Our only hope is in being "*justified freely*, by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Romans 3:24). (Compare John 14:6 quoted above.)

This redemptive work Jesus performed as the *Christ*, that is "the anointed," a name given to him, as the *Compendium* states: "Because He was *anointed* with the Holy Ghost and *ordained* by God the Father to be our chief Prophet, our only High Priest and our eternal King." These three words indicate our Lord's *offices* or functions as our Savior. John 1:41: "We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ." Christ is a Greek word, the translation of the Hebrew name Messiah. Both words signify "anointed" and refer to what the Old Testament tells about the use of holy oil, symbolizing the setting

aside of certain persons for an office, as God's representatives. This holy oil was made of myrrh, cinnamon, calamus, cassia, and olive oil (Ex. 30:22-33). It represents the Holy Spirit in his work of equipment for Kingdom work of those called thereto. Our Lord was anointed as to his human nature, not with the outward symbol, which He was not in need of, but with that which the oil signified, namely, the Holy Spirit. Acts 10:38: "Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power." That text refers to His *equipment* for His great life task as Savior. Anointing also includes *appointment*, something which our Lord had from eternity. Prov. 8:23: "I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, before the earth was."

Our Redeemer was appointed and anointed for three *offices*. They correspond, among other things, to the three parts of the image of God. He came to restore in His people—knowledge, as prophet; righteousness, as priest; holiness, as king. (Compare Chapter III.) Can you think of other reasons for this threefold office of our Lord?

His first office is that of *prophet*, to enlighten and instruct us by his Spirit and Word. That was foretold already by Moses (Deut. 18:15), quoted by Peter (Acts 3:22). To a prophet's work as a rule belonged three things; teaching, foretelling, and the working of miracles. He himself taught as our prophet, revealing God's name and counsel, as well as himself, as the way, the truth and the life. Through him prophets of old spoke; He still speaks through His ministers. He is the "great" prophet as our *Compendium* calls Him. May He also make us wise unto salvation, teaching us personally the three great things of Chapter II. Christ also *prophesied* about His suffering, death, resurrection, ascension, and second advent. And He wrought *miracles* to confirm his commission and message. Luke 24:19: "Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people."

The second office of Jesus is that of *high priest*. We may say that in it, as in his prophetic work, three things are comprehended. They are: offering, praying, and bless-

ing. This offering includes the *atonement* named above. Heb. 9:14: "Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God." Matt. 20:28: "The Son of Man came to give his life a ransom for many." Christ sacrificed *himself*, as the Old Testament priests offered lambs and other animals, looking forward to the coming of the true Lamb of God (John 1:29). The words chiefly used to express this self-sacrifice of our great Substitute are *satisfaction*, *propitiation*, *reconciliation*, *atonement*.

We already learned from Chapter VI: "He brought about satisfaction by His active and passive obedience"—an actual, complete and personal satisfaction. It satisfied all demands of God's justice, truth and holiness to bring about the pardon and acceptance of his people, to become God's children. Therefore we call the atonement *propitiatory*. Romans 3:25: "Whom God set forth to be a propitiation." It is named *vicarious*, that means that Christ was the *substitute* for his people. It was *penal*, that is, our Savior died as a punishment for our sin. And it was, moreover, *particular*, or *limited*. Over against the Arminians and others who hold a "*General Atonement*" theory, teaching that Christ died for all, in the sense of making salvation possible for all, the Reformed Churches teach that our Lord's atoning work was for his *people* (Matt. 1:21 and Heb. 2:17); for his *sheep* (John 10:15), and for his *Church*, "which he purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20; 28); for his *seed* (Isa. 53:10). While it is granted that the atonement was *sufficient* for all, we hold that it is *efficient* and designed only for the elect (see Chapter XVII). And it means far more than what Arminians hold it to mean: making salvation *possible* for all, dependent on the choice of man's so-called free will. It includes all the blessings of grace to make God's people actual partakers of salvation—in other words to *efficiently* save them, in the way of faith. Thus the Reformed conception of the atonement is far richer in contents than that of others. Moreover, such an efficient atonement we needed absolutely, for, as we saw in Chapter III, we are by nature dead in trespasses and sins, and need grace to be quickened in order to accept God's Mediator. Let us



often plead for that, boldly drawing nigh to the Throne of grace.

The principal part of the atonement is that God was reconciled to man. For the sake of Christ's work as our Substitute, God laid aside His anger, as a just God, an avenger of evil-doers, to open the floodgates of his love for all his people, unto their salvation. Isa. 53:10: "Yet it pleased Jehovah to bruise him; He hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul and offering for sin, He shall see his seed." This is plain, not alone from the Bible statements quoted, but also from the very patent fact that when men are alienated among themselves, it is the offended party which is to be reconciled and satisfied, not the offender. In this case the Lord was the offended One, and man the guilty offender.

Man's reconciliation to God is an outflow of it that God, through the expiatory work of our Substitute, was satisfied in his demands. Thereby the way was opened to bestow restoring mercy upon his people, and change their hearts so that they become friends and children of the Lord, instead of remaining, as we are by nature, enemies, under the influence of sin and Satan. Let us heartily appreciate this atoning work of our blessed High Priest!

The second part of Jesus' priestly work is that of *intercession*, which has been described as the constant and gracious will of Christ, on the ground of his sacrifice, to bring all His people to eternal salvation. In the Old Testament we find Abraham interceding. Do you know on what occasion? Heb. 7:25: "Seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them."

The Bible mentions as the *fruits* of the intercession the forgiveness of sin, succor in temptation, and the offering of acceptable spiritual sacrifices, as shown by the following texts:

1 John 1:21: "And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Heb. 2:17, 18: "A merciful Highpriest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted." 1 Peter 2:5: "To

be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." (Compare Rev. 8:3, 4.) Can you mention still other ensuing blessings? (Compare John 17:11, 15, 24.)

The third part of the priestly work of our Lord is to *bless* His people, so that they obtain, in answer to his intercession, all the temporal and eternal favors asked for. Eph. 1:3: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." The Old Testament high priest was ordered to pronounce a special form of blessing (Numbers 6:24-27): "Jehovah bless thee and keep thee; Jehovah make his face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee; Jehovah lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." These blessings are still bestowed through our Lord, the *only* High Priest, as the *Compendium* states, who by one offering hath perfected forever them that are sanctified (Heb. 10:14). Hence we condemn Rome's doctrine about a daily, bloodless repetition of the offer of Calvary through "priests."

The third office of Christ is his *royal* or *kingly* office. Here likewise we may mention three parts: gathering, ruling, and protecting his people. We distinguish between Christ's kingship of *power*, universal in character and scope, and his kingdom of *grace*, over the Church. The first is referred to in Matt. 28:18: "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth," and the second in Ps. 2:6: "For I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." That kingdom of grace will terminate in his kingdom of *glory*, at the end of time. (2 Peter 1:11.) *Subjects* of the kingdom of grace are all our Lord's people of both dispensations, both Jew and Gentile, the latter grafted into the one olive tree (Romans 11:17-22), fellow-heirs and of the same body (Eph. 3:6), even as Isa. 54:2 had already spoken of one "tent," to be enlarged. (Compare Article XXVII of the Confession.)

This Church is "*gathered*" by the Lord's Spirit and Word. John 10:16: "And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also must I bring, and they shall hear my voice; and they shall become one flock, one shepherd."

Our Lord *rules* His Church by His Spirit and Word, a willing people in the day of His power (Ps. 110:3). And he *protects* His Church against all foes, physical and spiritual, visible and invisible—world, devil, and flesh, so that the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (Matt. 16:18), and none of those given Him by the Father can be plucked out our Lord's hands (John 10:29).

Christ is called *eternal* King, because "of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:22). While the kingdom of our Lord in so far as it is that of power, shall one day be delivered up to the Father, after He hath put all enemies under his feet (1 Cor. 15:24, 25), that of grace and glory shall last forever.

May we often pray that this Anointed One may be our personal Prophet, Priest, and King. And may we all show to be "Christians" in the sense wherein the Heidelberg Catechism explains the name: "Because I am a member of Christ by faith, and thus am partaker of His anointing: that so I may confess His name and present myself a living sacrifice in thankfulness to him; and also that with a free and good conscience I may fight against sin and Satan in this life; and afterwards reign with Him eternally over all creatures.

### QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN WORK

- 1) Which names of our Redeemer can you mention besides those of Jesus and Christ?
- 2) What does it mean to "save," as indicated by the name Jesus?
- 3) Why is Jesus called Christ?
- 4) Which two parts belong to his anointing?
- 5) Which three works are attributed to Jesus as Prophet?
- 6) Which three works are included in Jesus' priestly office?
- 7) How many and what names can you mention signifying the atoning work of Jesus?
- 8) Which three works belong to his office as King?
- 9) What distinctions are made as to the kingdoms of our Lord?
- 10) Why are you called a Christian?

## CHAPTER XIV

## THE STATES OF THE MEDIATOR

- Q. 32.** What then hath Jesus Christ done to save us?
- A.** He has suffered for us, was crucified and died, was buried and descended into hell; that is, he suffered the torments of hell, and thus became obedient to his Father, that he might deliver us from the temporal and eternal punishment due to sin.
- Q. 33.** In which nature hath he suffered this?
- A.** Only in his human nature, that is, in soul and body.
- Q. 34.** What hath then his Godhead contributed thereto?
- A.** His Godhead, by its power, in such wise strengthened the assumed human nature, that it could bear the burden of God's wrath against sin, and deliver us from it.
- Q. 35.** Did Christ then remain under the power of death?
- A.** No; but he rose from the dead the third day for our justification. Rom. 4:25.
- Q. 36.** Where is Christ now, as to his human nature?
- A.** He is ascended into heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father; that is, exalted in the highest glory, far above all creatures, Eph. 1:20-21.
- Q. 37.** To what end is he there so highly exalted?
- A.** Particularly that he might from thence govern his church, and there be our intercessor with the Father.
- Q. 38.** Is he not with us then even unto the end of the world, as he hath promised us? Mat. 28:20.
- A.** With respect to his Godhead, majesty, grace and spirit, he is never absent from us; but with respect to his human nature, he remains in heaven, until he shall come again to judge the quick and the dead.

**A**FTER studying our Savior's natures, names and offices, we now come to his *states*. "State" in this sense means our Lord's "status" or relationship to the law. We distinguish between his state of *humiliation*, during which Christ, as our Substitute, stood guilty before the law of God and suffered as such, and his state of *exaltation*, during which He stands as righteous before God's law and is able to justify and bless all whom He represents.

It was during the state of humiliation that there took place what is named in reply to Question 32: "What, then, hath Jesus done to save us?": "He has suffered for us, was crucified and died, was buried and descended into hell." This answer implies what are called the *steps* or *degrees* of the humiliation, during which He merited salvation for his people, suffering in his human nature, that is, in soul and body, but in such wise strengthened by his Godhead "that it could bear the burden of God's wrath against sin, and deliver us from it." There are *five of these steps*.

The first step is usually called that of his *humble birth*. That pertains not simply to the lowly surroundings and circumstances at the time of his incarnation, as related in the story of the Nativity, but especially to the fact that the Son of God "emptied Himself," taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:7, 8).

*Suffering*, the second step of humiliation, consisted in this that He bore our sin and the wrath of God kindled against sin. This He endured during all "the days of his flesh" (Heb. 5:7), that is, during the entire state of humiliation, but especially at its close—as is evident from the Gospel story about Gethsemane and Calvary. He suffered not alone in his body, but also and especially in his soul. Think of the heart-breaking and overwhelming agony, manifested in his cry on the cross: "My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

This leads to the third step of our Lord's humiliation: his *death*, through crucifixion. This was a Roman mode of



execution. Israel knew of being suspended to a tree. Deut. 21:22, 23: "And if a man hath committed a sin worthy of death, and he be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt surely bury him the same day, for he that is hanged is accursed of God." Paul, in Gal. 3: 13, 14, applies that to our Lord: "Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: that upon the Gentiles might come the blessing of Abraham in Christ Jesus; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith."

Christ had to undergo death as our Substitute, to fulfill God's threat of death, uttered in Paradise as punishment of sin.

We speak of His *burial* as the fourth step or degree of our Mediator's humiliation. Our Lord predicted it Himself (Matt. 12:40). It was a proof of his being really dead, strikingly fulfilling the prophecy of Isa. 53:9: "They made his grave with the wicked, and with a rich man in his death," compared with Matt. 27:57-60. This burial was humiliating, since the tomb is a monument of our human guilt and consequent return to the dust, a prey of the worms, although in our Lord's case His body did not suffer disintegration, He being the Holy One, not to see corruption (Acts 2:27). Christ's burial also sanctified the grave for all his people.

The fifth or last step of humiliation is our Savior's "*descent into hell*," explained in Answer 32 as suffering the torments of hell. Others take it as a synonym of being buried. The explanation given in our *Compendium* is amply justified by expressions found in Ps. 116:3: "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell got hold upon me; I found trouble and sorrow."

May we heartily *appreciate* all this awful humiliation! Its *purpose* was, as related in Answer 32: "that thus (He) became obedient to his Father, that He might deliver us from the temporal and eternal punishment of sin."

During the state of humiliation, our Lord, as may be inferred from what was discussed previously, satisfied

God's justice. It demanded two things. The first was the suffering of punishment, Isa. 53:5: "The chastisement of our peace was upon Him." This included what we called: "passive obedience."

The second demand of God's justice was the fulfilling of the law. Christ rendered this through his active obedience. Phil. 2:8: "Becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross."

Through this He obtained for all his people, justification and the gift of eternal life, and all what that comprehends. "With his stripes we are *healed*" (Isa. 53:5.)

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The second state of our Mediator is that of *exaltation*, in order to apply the salvation, merited during the state of humiliation. It contains *four* steps or degrees. The *resurrection* was the first one of these. Our Lord did not "remain under the power of death" (Question 35). He rose from the dead, the third day. He himself had asserted: "I have power to lay it (life) down, and I have power to take it again" (John 10:18). Acts 2:24: "Whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs of death: because it was not possible that He should be holden by it." Romans 1:4: "Who was declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead; even Jesus Christ our Lord."

"The Lord is risen indeed" (Luke 23:34). Repeatedly He showed himself alive after his resurrection. How many "appearances" can you enumerate?

The *fruit* of the resurrection is not alone justification, named in Answer 35, based on Romans 4:25 (see Chapter XVIII), but sanctification as well (see Chapters XXIV and XXV), and likewise the resurrection of the just, with glorified bodies (Chapter XVII).

The *ascension* is the second step of the state of exaltation. It took place forty days after the resurrection. Christ ascended to heaven, *really, visibly* and *locally*. Heb. 4:14: "Having then a great High Priest who passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession." The significance of the ascension of our

Lord was that of his triumphant entrance into heaven, his triumph over all evil powers of earth and hell, his proving himself Lord over the laws of nature, and his return to the Father. The Heidelberg Catechism enumerates as advantages of the ascension: "First, that He is our advocate in the presence of his Father in heaven; secondly, that we have our flesh in heaven, as a sure pledge that He, as the head, will also take up to Himself us, as His members; thirdly, that He sends us His Spirit as an earnest, by whose power we seek the things which are above" (Answer 49). (Earnest signifies: first fruits.)

The third step of exaltation is our Lord's *session* at God's right hand, that is, as the *Compendium* states, "exalted in the highest glory, far above all creatures" (Eph. 1:20, 21). Its *purpose* or end is given as follows: "Particularly that He might from thence govern his Church and there be our Intercessor with the Father." (Compare about this Intercession, Chapter XIII.) This session at God's right hand does not mean that Jesus is not with us to the end of the world as He hath promised, Question 38. Indeed not. "With respect to his Godhead, majesty, grace and spirit, He is never absent from us; but with respect to his human nature, He remains in heaven, until He shall come again to judge the quick and the dead."

It is plain, of course, that this "sitting at the right hand of God" is a figurative expression, since God is a Spirit. It is an allusion to a custom of oriental courts. Sitting at a ruler's right hand signified bestowal of honors and favors. With reference to our exalted Lord it expresses that great honor is now his, and dominion, ultimately resulting in complete vindication and victory. 1 Cor. 15:25: "For He must reign till He hath put all his enemies under his feet." This last named and glorious event will occur when the fourth step of the state of exaltation occurs, at his Second Advent, see Chapter XVII, at the end of this dispensation of the covenant of grace. Acts 3:21: "Whom the heavens must receive until the times of restoration of all things."

May we all seek our all in Christ, who "humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross, wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name." (Phil. 2:8, 9.)

### QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN WORK

- 1) Wherein must the Mediator be known?
- 2) What is meant by the state of humiliation?
- 3) Mention its five steps and briefly describe each.
- 4) What was the purpose of the humiliation?
- 5) Which two things did God's justice demand?
- 6) What is meant by the state of exaltation?
- 7) Describe the fruits of the resurrection.
- 8) Of what advantage is the ascension to us?
- 9) What is the meaning of Jesus' sitting at God's right hand?
- 10) Can you give some signs of the Lord's coming and of the end of the world? Matt. 24:3.

## CHAPTER XV

## THE HOLY SPRIT AND HIS WORK. COMMON AND SPECIAL GRACE. HIS REGENERATING, LEADING AND COMFORTING

**Q. 39.** What do you believe concerning the Holy Ghost?

**A.** That he is the true and co-eternal God with the Father and Son; and that He, being given to me of the Father, through Christ, regenerates me and leads me into all truth, comforts me, and will abide with me forever.

**W**E are now to discuss the Person and work of the third Person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit. In Chapter X we already learned of his *procession* from both the Father and the Son—which is named his “personal property,” that is, distinctively his own, like the personal property of the Son is that of generation, and of the Father that of self-existence. We also proved in that Chapter that the Holy Spirit is a person and not simply a divine influence. The Christian Church holds, as expressed in our *Compendium*, that the Holy Spirit “is the true and co-eternal God with the Father and the Son.” We know this from the fact that divine names, attributes, works, and honors are ascribed to Him. Divine *names*: in Acts 5:3 the Spirit is called God; 2 Cor. 3:18: “We . . . are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit.” Divine *attributes*: He is eternal in His nature (Heb. 9:14); omnipresent (Ps. 139:7-10); omnipotent (Luke 1:35); omniscient (1 Cor. 2:10, 11). These terms have been explained already in Chapter IX on the attributes of God. Divine *works* attributed to the Holy Spirit are those of creation, as named in Chapter XI. Job 33:4: “The Spirit of God hath made me, and the Breath of the Almighty hath given me life.” Regeneration is also wrought by the Holy Ghost (John 3: 5-8), and in the Resurrection his activity is foretold in



Romans 8:11. Divine *honors* are included in what we named in Chapter X, about the baptism formula of Matt. 28:19 and the apostolic benediction of 2 Cor. 13:14: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all."

The Bible contains precious *names* and *titles* given to the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, such as "Spirit of glory" (1 Peter 4:14); "Spirit of promise" (Eph. 1:13); "Spirit of wisdom and knowledge" (Isa. 11:2), and "Spirit of truth" (John 14:17), as well as "Spirit of life" (Rom. 8:2), and "Spirit of Grace" (Heb. 10:39). The name "Spirit of life" is his because the Holy Ghost is the author of all life in nature and of grace. Already in the story of creation (Gen. 1:2), we read: "The Spirit of God moved upon the waters;" Ps. 104:30: "Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created;" John 6:63: "It is the Spirit that giveth life."

The name "Spirit of grace" indicates that the Holy Ghost is author of "grace." We distinguish between *common* and *special* grace. *Special* or particular grace is God's sovereign and free favor toward his elect, unto their salvation—see Chapter XVII. *Common* grace is God's free favor extended to all men, restraining sin and distributing all kinds of natural gifts. Like all grace, (compare Chapter IX), this common grace is undeserved and forfeited favor, freely given. It accounts for it that even though man is dead in trespasses and sins, still so many things that are beautiful, true, and good are found among the unregenerated children of men, although in them all the taint of sin is evident. It furnishes the background for the activities of special grace as well as a basis for needful coöperation between man and man for the uplift of mankind and the improvement of conditions and institutions, locally, nationally, and internationally. Still, there are important points of *difference* between the two kinds of grace. Common grace is given to all people; particular grace only to the elect. Particular grace is saving in its effect, common grace is not. Common grace checks sin, for the time being. Through particular grace God's people

become "overcomers," "without spot or wrinkle." Common grace may be said to flow from Christ as Mediator of creation, in his love for his handiwork, while particular grace descends from him as Mediator of redemption.

Evidences of the Holy Spirit's workings in the above named sense have been found in the imparting of mechanical skill to Bezalel (Ex. 31:3), of strength to Samson (Judges 14:6, 19), and of prophecy to Saul (1 Sam. 19:23). Compare Jude:6; Ps. 119:64; Acts 14:17; Job 32:28; Gen. 6:3; Hab. 3:2.

Besides the works of the Spirit with His common grace in all domains of human life and activity, He is truly called "*Spirit of grace*" because of what He works in God's people in particular. As such He applies the merits of Christ to their complete salvation. That is what is meant by particular or saving grace. 1 Cor. 6:11: "And such were some of you, but ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." The blessings here included constitute what has been named the "chain of salvation," namely: regeneration, calling, conversion (consisting of repentance and faith), and sanctification. Some have added glorification. (This Calling is treated in Chapter XVII; Conversion in Chapter XXIV; Sanctification in Chapter XXVI.)

In the present Chapter we confine ourselves to discussing *regeneration*. We distinguish between *regeneration* in a narrow and in a wider sense. The first denotes the implanting of spiritual life in God's people. John 3:5: "Except one be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." Eph. 2:1: "And you did He make alive when ye were dead through trespasses and sins." Regeneration in this sense takes place in our heart, in our subconscious life, and evidently, as a rule, very early in the life of its recipients. It is wrought by God's Spirit.

Regeneration in the wider sense denotes the first *manifestation* of spiritual life in its recipients, showing itself in enlightening of the mind, bending of the will Godward,

and in renewing the affections. It is wrought by God's Spirit calling through His Word (Chapter XVII). James 1:18: "Of His own will He brought us forth by the Word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures."

We can know that we are regenerated by showing the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control, faith, (Gal. 5:22). Note the three *groups* named here. The first three are in relation to God: love, joy, peace; the second in relation to our fellow-men: long-suffering, gentleness, goodness; the third in our individual Christian life: faithfulness, meekness, self-control. May we be enabled to show them! Do we?

Besides the regenerating work described, the *Compendium* names the Spirit's *leading* into all truth, *comforting* and *abiding* forever. That also is blessedly true. The Spirit *leads* and guides God's people, even as to the details of their life and labor, as well as "into the truth" needed unto salvation and for consecration of talents and time (Romans 8:14; Gal. 5:16, 25; Acts 8:27-29; 13:2-4; 16:6). The Spirit also moved the prophets of old to prophesy (2 Peter 1:20, 21). He still is the interpreter of Scripture (1 Cor. 2:9-14); the Spirit of wisdom and revelations (Eph. 1:17; John 16:14, 15).

The Spirit *comforts* also. That indicates that amid all the sorrows of life, in its conflicts and trials, He sustains and cheers, and brings consolation such as the world cannot give nor take away. He fulfills the promise: "As one whom his mother comforteth, so I will comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem" (Isa. 66:13).

This Holy Spirit, as applying the merits of Christ to His people, "will *abide* with me forever," as the answer of the *Compendium* puts it. So each child of God is entitled to say, relying on God's promise of grace.

The Reformed Churches, on account of this abiding character of grace, believe in the perseverance of the saints (Chapter XXV).

But while this is a doctrine full of rich consolation to the heirs of salvation, it should be borne in mind that

it may not be *abused*. There is such a thing as "*grieving the Spirit*" (Eph. 4:30, 31), a figure of speech used in Isa. 63:10: "But they rebelled, and grieved His holy Spirit; therefore He was turned to be their enemy, and himself fought against them." Grieving the Spirit denotes doing things He disapproves of, causing his gracious operations to be decreased and his anger felt in our soul.

Sinful men may even "*quench the Spirit*" (1 Thess. 5:19), that is, his illumination and gifts unto service. Ananias was guilty of *lying* to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3); Stephen accused the Jews of *resisting* the Holy Ghost (Acts 7:51), while Heb. 10:29 speaks of the sore punishment due to those who have "done *despite* unto the Spirit of grace." Most grievous of all, because unpardonable, is *blaspheming* the Holy Spirit (Matt. 12:31, 32), which does not refer to sinning through weakness or fear, as Peter did in denying Christ, or through ignorance, as Paul in persecuting the Church of God, but to maliciously denying, maligning and opposing the truth and cause of God, against the warnings of the Spirit. May the Lord graciously keep us from in any way offending the Holy Ghost, the Spirit of grace and glory, but may we rather "walk in the Spirit" (Gal. 5:16), and often pray for his operations (Luke 11:13.)

### QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN WORK

- 1) How do we know that the Holy Spirit is God?
- 2) Mention four of his divine works.
- 3) Why is He called "Spirit of life."
- 4) What is meant by common grace?
- 5) What is meant by special or particular grace?
- 6) Which are the blessings of the "chain of salvation"?
- 7) Classify the "fruit of the Spirit" named in Gal. 5:22.
- 8) What is meant by the Spirit's leading?
- 9) What is meant by the Spirit's comforting?
- 10) Against which offenses against the Holy Spirit should we be on our guard?

## CHAPTER XVI

## THE CHURCH AND ITS ATTRIBUTES, DISTINCTIONS, MARKS, OFFICE-BEARERS, AND DUTY

**Q. 40.** What believest thou concerning the Holy Catholic Church?

**A.** That the Son of God gathers by his Word and Spirit out of the whole human race, those who are chosen to eternal life, to be a Church to himself; of which I believe I am, and always shall remain a living member.

**Q. 41.** Where doth he gather his Church?

**A.** Where God's Word is purely preached, and the holy Sacraments administered according to the institution of Christ.

**I**N Chapters VIII to XVI we discussed what we, according to the Apostles' Creed, "believed in." The expression "believe in," in the proper sense, appertains only to the great objects of faith: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to be known and confided in, unto salvation. Now we come to subordinate articles of our faith which we are to believe. In our present Chapter the Church and its attributes, distinctions, marks, office-bearers, and duty are to be covered.

"What believest thou concerning the Holy Catholic Church?" so reads Question 40. The word "Church" is found about one hundred times in our English New Testament, as a translation of the Greek word *ekklesia*, meaning "that which is called out." In Acts 19:37 it is used to indicate a temple. In our *Compendium* two adjectives are used to describe the Church: *holy* and *catholic*.

The first word, "holy," indicates that the Church is sanctified in Christ and through the Holy Spirit—"set aside," separate from the world and devoted to God. The second word, "catholic," indicates that the Church is general or universal, that is, not confined to any one



people, but embracing the believers of all nations and races, of all times and all places. The Heidelberg Catechism adds the adjective "*christian*," because Christ is the head, Redeemer and owner of the Church. Rev. 5:9: "For thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood, men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nations." Eph. 5:23: "Christ also is the head of the Church, being himself the Savior of the body." The Roman Church adds the adjective "*apostolic*." Why?

The Church may be viewed as an organism and an institute. As an *organism* all believers belong to it, wherever found, because they are all organically joined together through the Holy Spirit as one body under one Head, Christ. Viewed as an *institute* the Church is an organization, in which offices are instituted by divine authority, and in which the administration of Word and Sacrament takes place.

We also distinguish between the *militant* and *triumphant Church*—the former indicating the "fighting" Church, which is on earth, the latter the "victorious" Church in heaven. Roman Catholics speak of a third division of the Church, the *suffering Church*, composed, they claim, of the souls in purgatory. See Chapter XVII, II, §4, *Compendium Explained*. The idea of "militant" Church is based on scriptural allusions to christians being soldiers of Christ, contending for the faith (1 Tim. 6:12; Jude:3). The idea of "triumphant" Church is taken from Holy Writ as it pictures the saints in heaven who "overcame." Rev. 12:11: "And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb, and because of the word of their testimony." These two parts of the Church, while separate as to locality, are one and the same Church, because the Church is one body under one Head. Heb. 12:22, 23: "But ye are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the first born who are enrolled in heaven."

We also use the distinction between the Church as *visible* and *invisible*. That does not denote two Churches, for the same reason just given. But it represents the

Church in its two sides. *Invisible* is the Church of God regarding its faith and communion with Christ, as God sees it. The *visible* Church "is a society made up of all such as in all ages and places of the world do profess the true religion, and of their children." (*Shorter Catechism*, Question 62.) The two sides of the Church, invisible and visible, are not co-extensive, because hypocrites are hidden as a rule in the visible Church, while they are not in the invisible Church. Romans 9:6: "For they are not all Israel, that are of Israel."

Of this Church we are told in Answer 40 that the Son of God *gathers* it by His Word and Spirit out of the whole human race. It is the Son of God who "gathers" the Church. Consequently the Church is a divine institution and not a "society" or organization, in the ordinary sense, a *human* institution, although the Lord makes use of human instrumentality to bring children of men into its communion. In the strict sense Christ alone "gathers" his Church, since He alone has power over human hearts. Ps. 110:3: "Thy people offer themselves willingly in the day of Thy power, in holy array. And He alone can protect and maintain his Church so that the gates of hell do not prevail against it (Matt. 16:18).

The Lord gathers his Church "by his Word and Spirit," and that "out of the whole human race," those "*chosen* unto eternal life"—as the next Chapter discusses in detail.

Of this Church the true believer can say: "Of which I believe I am, and always shall remain, a living member." This last statement appertains to what Chapter XXV contains: the perseverance of the saints, already alluded to in the previous Chapter.

If the question is asked: "*where* does Christ gather His Church?" the reply is: "Where God's Word is purely preached and the holy sacraments administered according to the institution of Christ." Acts 2:42: "And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers." Eph. 2:20: "Being built upon the foundation of the apostles and

prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief corner-stone."

The pure preaching of the Word, and the proper administration of the Sacraments constitute the first two "marks" of the Church. As a third "mark" whereby we may know the true Church, we name the exercise of Church discipline, according to the Word of God. 1 Cor. 5:13: "Put away the wicked man from among yourselves." In connection with the exercise of discipline we speak of the "keys" of the kingdom (Matt. 16:19), of which the first is the preaching of the Gospel, and the second christian discipline—discussed in Chapter XXII.

We should not fail to note that the *Compendium* closely joins Word and Spirit as the means whereby the Son of God gathers the Church. Those two should not be separated. The Church is gathered, not apart from the Word, exclusively by the Spirit's operations, as fanatics claim, nor by the Word alone, apart from the Spirit, as rationalists assert. The "Calling" functioning therein is discussed in the next Chapter.

The Heidelberg Catechism mentions in addition to what the *Compendium* names that the Church is gathered "agreeing in true faith." While God's people here below differ in many ways, there is a "unity of faith" more than the world recognizes. The Church is one in its inner life, "For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bound or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Cor. 12:13). As to the great "fundamentals" of the holy christian religion there is also a deeper unity than is often apparent. And the great trouble of the ages has been such an over-emphasis placed on what often were non-essentials, that the deeper lying essential truths were to some extent lost sight of or at least overlooked.

"Before our Father's throne  
We pour our ardent prayers;  
Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one,  
Our comforts and our cares."

(For these "fundamentals" compare Eph. 4:4-6 and the leading truths of the Apostles' Creed.)

As human instruments the Lord employs for this "gathering," and for the handling of the "keys" above mentioned, the *office-bearers* of the Church. Extra-ordinary office-bearers were the apostles and evangelists. The "marks" of an apostle were those of having been sent by Christ himself, having been witness of his life, and especially of his resurrection, and infallible guidance of the Holy Spirit in teaching and writing (Gal. 1:1; Acts 1:21; John 14:26). Evangelists were helpers of the apostles, such as Philip and Timothy (Acts 21:8; 2 Tim. 4:5). The offices of apostles and evangelists were for the duration of the period of the establishment of the New Testament Church, as the prophets were called during certain critical periods of the history of the kingdom of God.

Some have claimed that the office of evangelists is the same as that of missionaries and consequently is continued to this day. Is there sufficient ground for holding this?

The ordinary and permanent offices are those of ministers, elders and deacons. Ministers represent the Christ as prophet; elders as king; deacons as priest. Eph. 4:11: "And He gave some to be apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering, unto the building up of the body of Christ." For the institution of the offices of elders and deacons and the work pertaining to them, see the "Form of Ordination of Elders and Deacons" as part of the Reformed Liturgy.

This Church of our Lord has a great *work* entrusted to it as its sacred duty. It is to perfect the saints, building up the body of Christ (Eph. 4:11), and being a light, a salt (Matt. 5:13, 14), and the pillar and ground of truth (1 Tim. 3:15). The extension of the kingdom of God is also entrusted to it in the great missionary command of Matt. 28:19, 20: "Go ye therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you."

Isa. 54:2: "Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thy habitations: spare not: lengthen thy cords and strengthen thy stakes." The *object*

of the missionary enterprise is threefold: the conversion of sinners, the planting of churches, and the glorifying of God (Eph. 1:10; 3:10, 11; Romans 11:32). Each christian should willingly offer his gifts and talents that God's kingdom may come at home and abroad, and also engage as much as possible in witnessing unto Christ (Acts 1:8). We should likewise come to blessed assurance of really being a "living member" of the Church, and "attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ . . . from whom the whole body fitly framed and knit together . . . maketh the increase of the body unto the building up of itself in love" (Eph. 4:13-17).

### QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN WORK

- 1) Give a definition of the Church.
- 2) Why is the Church called holy?
- 3) Why is it called "catholic"?
- 4) What do we mean by the distinction between the Church as organism and as institute?
- 5) Prove from the Bible that the Church here below is rightly called "militant."
- 6) What is denoted by the names visible and invisible Church?
- 7) Which are the three "marks" of the Church?
- 8) What is meant by the "unity of the true faith"?
- 9) Which truths do you consider "fundamental"?
- 10) What is the object of Missions? What are its incentives?



## CHAPTER XVII.

THE CHURCH, CALLED, CHOSEN, A COMMUNION  
OF SAINTS. CHRIST'S SECOND COMING. THE  
RESURRECTION, THE JUDGMENT, ETER-  
NAL LIFE, AND ETERNAL DEATH

**Q. 42. What benefits doth Christ bestow on his Church?**

**A. He grants her remission of sins, the resurrection of the body, and eternal life.**

**I**N the previous Chapter we named "Calling" as functioning in the gathering of the Church by the Word and the Spirit of the Son of God. That will be discussed now, as well as the phrase of Answer 41: "Those who are chosen to eternal life." In addition thereto we shall treat of the "benefits" which Christ bestows upon His Church, as expressed in Answer 42, printed above this Chapter.

We already made mention of the fact that the New Testament word for "Church" (in the Greek tongue, *ekklesia*), literally means "called out." Such is also essentially the significance of the Old Testament Hebrew word for Church, translated as "congregation," Lev. 8:3: "And gather thou all the congregation together, unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation." Ps. 74:2: "Remember thy congregation which Thou hast gotten of old, which Thou hast redeemed to be the tribe of thine inheritance."

"Calling" or "vocation" is one of the links of the chain of salvation. We usually speak of two kinds of calling. The one is external, by the Word; the other internal, by the Word and the Spirit. The *external calling* takes place in the presentation of the Word, and particularly in the proclamation of "the promise of the Gospel", that whosoever believes in Christ crucified, shall not perish, but have everlasting life. "This promise, together with the command to repent and believe, ought to be declared and published to all nations, and to all persons promiscuously and

without distinctions, to whom God out of His good pleasure sends the Gospel." "As many as are called by the Gospel, are unfeignedly called: for God has most earnestly and truly declared in His Word, what will be acceptable to Him; namely, that all who are called, should comply with the invitation. He, moreover, seriously promises eternal life and rest to as many as shall come to Him, and believe on Him." (Canons of Dordt, II, Articles 5 and 6; III, IV, Article 8.)

God also calls us through history, providence, and nature, as well as through the warnings of conscience (Job 33:14-16). This is sometimes named "*general calling*," because it comes to all men, whereas the outward or external calling above described only comes to those reached by the Word.

The *internal calling* is "the work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, He doth persuade and enable us to embrace Christ, freely offered to us in the Gospel" (*Shorter Catechism*, Question 31). In so far as this internal calling effects regeneration in the narrow sense, as described in Chapter XV, it is named *creative calling* (Romans 4:17); in so far as it results in regeneration in the wider sense, we speak of it usually as *effectual calling*.

Besides the external and internal calling here discussed, there is also a *calling unto service*, Acts 13:2: "The Holy Ghost said: separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them." But that is extraneous to the subject here under discussion, however important it may be otherwise to the individual and the Church.

Not all people are called internally to become members of the Church. Matt. 22:14: "For many are called, but few chosen." Romans 8:30: "And whom He foreordained, them He also called."

That leads us to the doctrine of *foreordination* or *predestination*, an unpopular subject with many, but thoroughly biblical, and very important.

In Chapter IX we spoke of God's secret will, or the will of his decree. God's decree is "his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his will, whereby, for his own glory, He hath foreordained whatever comes to pass" (*Shorter Catechism*, Question 7). Ps. 33:11: "The counsel of the Lord standeth forever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations." God's decree may be taken in the *wide sense* of his *counsel*, and as such it embraces the entire universe, with all its forces, things, personalities, and events.

In so far as it has to do with rational creatures, that is, angels and men, we usually speak of it as *Predestination*, which embraces two parts: sovereign *Election* of some to everlasting life and most righteous *Reprobation* of others. It may be described as follows:

"God, by an eternal and immutable decree, out of his mere love, for the praise of his glorious grace, to be manifested in due time, hath elected some angels to glory; and, in Christ, hath chosen some men to eternal life, and the means thereof, and also, according to his sovereign power, and the unsearchable counsel of his own will (whereby He extendeth or withholdeth favor as He pleaseth) hath passed by, and fore-ordained the rest to his honor and wrath, to be for their sin inflicted, to the praise of the glory of his justice" (*Larger Catechism*, Question 13). 1 Tim. 5:21: "I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels." Eph. 1:4, 5, 6: "According as He hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved." Acts 13:48: "And as many as were ordained to eternal life believed."

The Lord God does not simply *foreknow* who are going to be saved, foreseeing it by his omniscience, as some claim, but has *foreordained* it according to the action of his free and sovereign will. Neither our good works nor

our faith are the cause of Election, but their fruit. God chose his people before the foundation of the world, not *because*, but "*that* we should be holy and without blemish before Him in love" (Eph. 1:4). Consequently, in answer to the question, "*why* are some chosen and others rejected?", we reply: God so decided according to the sovereign good pleasure of his will (Eph. 1:5).

Is there no unrighteousness with God in doing so? We answer: No, because God might justly have rejected all mankind, whereas He chose to glory an innumerable multitude (Rev. 7:9). Romans 9:21: "Or hath not the potter a right over the clay, from the same lump to make one part a vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?" (Cf. Daniel 4:35.) (About different conceptions of Predestination, see our *Compendium Explained*, Chapter XVII.)

This doctrine is a great mystery, and it must be borne in mind that the Synod of Dordrecht, 1618-'19, which formulated this as well as kindred doctrines, exhorted "all their brethren in the Gospel of Christ, to conduct themselves piously and religiously in handling this doctrine . . . to direct it to the glory of the Divine Name, to holiness of life, and to the consolation of afflicted souls."

We should also be kept from abusing the doctrine as an excuse for negligence and carelessness, in a spirit of fatalism. In the definition of Predestination, as we quoted it from the *Larger Catechism*, we saw that it included not alone men chosen to eternal life, but also "the means." And we are holden to employ the means ordained by God, especially the reverent reading of his blessed Word and prayer. Moreover, we are not unduly and curiously to inquire concerning the secret things, but to busy ourselves with those which are revealed, as God already warned through Moses: "The secret things belong unto Jehovah our God; but the things that are revealed belong unto us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deut. 29:29). Among the revealed things are God's commands to repent and to believe the Gospel, as mentioned under external calling above. And we can *know* whether we are chosen, namely: by the *fruits* of

Election. The Fathers of Dordt taught us: "The elect, in due time, though in various degrees and in different measures, attain the assurance of this their eternal and unchangeable Election, not by inquisitively prying into the secret and deep things of God, but by observing in themselves with a spiritual joy and holy pleasure, the infallible fruits of Election pointed out in the Word of God; such as a true faith in Christ, filial fear, a godly sorrow for sin, a hungering and thirsting after righteousness," etc., etc. Again: "Those who do not yet experience a lively faith in Christ, an assured confidence of soul, peace of conscience, an earnest endeavor after filial obedience, and glorying in God through Christ, efficaciously wrought in them, and do nevertheless persist in using the means which God hath appointed for working these graces in us, ought not to be alarmed at the mention of Reprobation, nor to rank themselves among the reprobated, but diligently to persevere in the use of the means, and with ardent desires devoutly and humbly to wait for a season of richer grace . . . But this doctrine is justly terrible to those, who, regardless of God, and of the Savior Jesus Christ, have wholly given themselves up to the cares of the world, and the pleasures of the flesh, so long as they are not seriously converted to God" (Canons, I, Articles 12 and 16). Especially the meditation of and pleading on the *promises of the Covenant of Grace*, signified and sealed in Baptism (Chapters XIX and XXI), ought to encourage us greatly, as Covenant people, to make sure our calling and election (2 Peter 1:10).

The tenth article of the Apostles' Creed, which mentions the Church, also names "*the communion of saints.*" This was added about 400 A. D., owing to the schism caused by Donatists. It was designed to bring out the idea that death does not sever relationship between the militant Church on earth and the triumphant Church in heaven. The Heidelberg Catechism understands by it: "First, that all and every one who believes, being members of Christ, are in common partakers of Him, and of all his riches and gifts; secondly, that every one must know it to



be his duty, readily and cheerfully to employ his gifts for the advantage and salvation of other members." There is included therein both a *privilege* and a *responsibility*. The *privilege* is "the communion in grace, which the members of the invisible Church have with Christ, their partaking of all the virtue of His mediation, in their justification, adoption, sanctification, and whatever else in this life manifests their union with Him—whereby they are spiritually and mystically, yet really and inseparably, joined to Christ as their head and husband" (*Larger Catechism*, Question 69, 66). The *responsibility* includes obligations, not simply regarding congregational activities, but with reference to all domains of life—therein to use talents and time, influence and money, for the spiritual and temporal good of others, in all forms of christian activity, letting our light shine before men, that they may see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven (Matt. 5:16). Alas, how often do professing christians forget this obligation in private and public life!

The Church of God enjoys many "*benefits*." Its gathering or calling as such, as well and especially its Election, named in Answer 40 and described in this Chapter, is all free favor—divine "well-doing," as the word benefit signifies. In Answer 42 three benefits are singled out: "remission of sin, the resurrection of the body, and eternal life." This *remission* of sin will be discussed in the next Chapter. The *resurrection* of the body will occur at the time of the Second Advent, when Christ "shall come again at the last day in great power, and in the full manifestation of his own glory, and of his Father's, with all his holy angels, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God, to judge the world in righteousness" (*Larger Catechism*, Question 56).

(For a fuller discussion of the Millennium and kindred questions, we refer to our *Compendium Explained*, Chapter XVII.)

Concerning the *Resurrection*: "We are to believe, that at the last day there shall be a general resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust, when they that are then

found alive shall in a moment be changed; and the self-same bodies of the dead which are laid in the grave, being then again united to their souls forever, shall be raised up by the power of Christ. The bodies of the just, by the Spirit of Christ, and by virtue of his resurrection as their head, shall be raised in power, spiritual and incorruptible, and made like to his glorious body; and the bodies of the wicked shall be raised up in dishonor by him as an offended Judge" (*Larger Catechism*, Question 87).

Immediately after the resurrection follows the *Last Judgment*, "the final judgment of angels and men, the day and hour whereof no man knoweth, that all may watch and pray, and be ever ready for the coming of the Lord" (*Larger Catechism*, Question 88).

The Reformed Churches believe in one *general* resurrection, and not in two or more, separated by a thousand years, as some teach. The Reformed also believe in *one* Return of Christ, and not two, (one *for* his Church and one *with* his Church, 1000 years apart,) as those hold who believe in more than one judgment. (See for details our *Compendium Enlarged*, Chapter XXII.) The fact that there is only one Coming and one Judgment, is clear from several texts. John 5:28, 29: "The hour cometh in which all that are in the tombs shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment." Acts 24:15: "There shall be a resurrection both of the just and unjust." Dan. 12:2: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." Matt. 19:31-33: "But when the Son of Man shall come in his glory, and all the angels with him, then shall He sit on the throne of his glory, and before him shall be gathered all the nations: and He shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats; and He shall set the sheep on his right hand and the goats on the left."

The righteous will then enjoy *eternal life*, that is, perfect and glorious enjoyment of God forever, in a place called heaven, a most blissful abode, the Father's house

with its many mansions (John 14:2; Ps. 73:24; 17:15; Rev. 1:6). But the unrighteous, with Satan and his fallen angels, shall be cast into the lake of fire—the second death (Rev. 20:10, 14, 15), the everlasting punishment of sin (Chapter V). May God graciously keep us from such a lot!

### QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN WORK

- 1) What can you say about Vocation or Calling as to its kinds?
- 2) What is meant by God's decree or council, in the wide sense?
- 3) Which names can you give to express God's decree regarding the eternal state of rational beings?
- 4) Why is God not to be considered unrighteous in Election?
- 5) Why should not this doctrine be used as an excuse for negligence and carelessness?
- 6) What service does the doctrine of the Covenant of grace render as to our interest in Election?
- 7) Mention ways wherein we should discharge obligations involved in the Communion of the Saints?
- 8) What can you say about the Resurrection?
- 9) What about the Judgment?
- 10) Mention grounds for the Reformed doctrine of one resurrection, and one general judgment at the end of time.

## CHAPTER XVIII

JUSTIFICATION, THE BENEFIT OF FAITH, AND  
FAITH'S ORIGIN

- Q. 43. What doth it profit thee now that thou believest all this?
- A. That I am righteous in Christ before God. Rom. 5:10.
- Q. 44. How art thou righteous before God?
- A. Only by a true faith in Jesus Christ.
- Q. 45. How is it to be understood that thou art justified by faith only?
- A. Thus: that the perfect satisfaction, and righteousness of Christ alone are imputed to me of God, by which my sins are forgiven me, and I become an heir of everlasting life; and that I cannot receive that righteousness by any other means than by faith.
- Q. 46. Why cannot our good works be our righteousness before God, or some part thereof?
- A. Because even our best works, in this life, are imperfect, and polluted with sins.
- Q. 47. Do our good works then merit nothing, which yet God will reward in this, and in a future life?
- A. This reward is not given out of merit, but of grace.
- Q. 48. Who worketh that faith in thee?
- A. The Holy Ghost.
- Q. 49. By what means?
- A. By the hearing of the word preached. Rom. 10: 14-17.
- Q. 50. How does he strengthen that faith?
- A. By the same word preached, and by the use of the holy sacraments.

SO far we have discussed "the sum of that which God hath promised in the Gospel, and commanded us to believe"—as comprehended in the twelve articles of the

Apostles' Creed—(Chapter VII), covering Questions 20–42 of the *Compendium*.

Now we find Question 43 asking: "What doth it *profit* thee now that thou believest all this?" And the answer is: "That I am righteous before God (Romans 5:10), and that by a true faith in Jesus Christ." This brings us to the subject of *Justification*, as the profit of faith, or as a better term would be, its benefit . . . Faith's origin is also named in what is printed above this Chapter.

*Justification* may be described as "an act of God's free grace, wherein He pardoneth all our sins and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ, imputed to us, and received by faith alone" (*Shorter Catechism*, Question 33). Eph. 1:7: "In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace."

To justify denotes to declare or pronounce one "just," freed before the Law; not to *make* just, inwardly. That belongs to sanctification (see Chapter XXV).

Reformed theologians have spoken of several *steps* or stages in Justification. First of all, a justification from *eternity*, in the Covenant of Redemption, in which the sins of his people were laid upon Christ. In Rev. 13:8 we read of the Lamb "slain from the foundation of the world," in connection with names in the book of the Lamb. Secondly, there is a justification through the resurrection of Jesus (Romans 4:25), the *collective* justification of Christ's people—his mystical body. Thirdly, in effectual calling is included *objective* justification of the individual believer in God's court. Romans 8:30: "And whom He called, them He also justified." Fourthly, there is *subjective* justification by faith, before the bar of the believer's conscience, Romans 5:1: "Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God." A fifth justification is to be *public*, during the Final Judgment. Some speak of justification before *men*, by works, as mentioned by James, regarding Abraham and Rahab (James 2:21-25).

Our *Compendium* limits itself to the fourth stage of justification. "How art thou righteous before God?" "Only by a true faith in Jesus Christ." (Romans 5:1.)



"How is it to be understood that thou art justified by faith only?" (Question 45.) "Thus: that the perfect satisfaction and righteousness of Christ alone are imputed to me of God, by which my sins are forgiven me and I become an heir of everlasting life; and that I cannot receive that righteousness by any other means than by faith." That does not mean that faith *merits* righteousness for us, as Rome teaches. On the contrary, faith is only the instrument or means to obtain justification. Like the extended hand of the beggar does not merit the alms given, but simply receives it, so is saving faith, as it accepts justification, as God's free gift of grace. Faith is indispensable as such, but not in any way meritorious. For that matter, even faith is God's gift to His people.

The only *ground* for justification is, as the *Compendium* puts it: "the perfect satisfaction, and righteousness of Christ."

"Lord, thy imputed righteousness  
My beauty is, my glorious dress."

We distinguish between two *parts* in justification: remission of sins, and adoption unto children and heirs. Acts 26:17: "That they may receive remission of sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in Him." In the *remission* of sins the Lord pardons all the sins of the believer, both original and actual—Chapter V.

The Heidelberg Catechism, in Answer 60, beautifully describes its contents: "So that, though my conscience accuse me, that I have grossly transgressed all the commands of God, and kept none of them, and am still inclined to all evil; notwithstanding, God, without any merit of mine, but only of mere grace, grants and imputes to me, the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ; even so, as if I never had had, nor committed any sin: yea, as if I had fully accomplished all that obedience which Christ hath accomplished for me; inasmuch as I embrace such benefit with a believing heart."

"*Adoption* is an act of the free grace of God, in and

for his only Son Jesus Christ, whereby all those that are justified are received into the number of his children, have his name put upon them, the Spirit of his Son given them, are under his Fatherly care and dispensations, admitted to all the liberties and privileges of the sons of God, made heirs of all the promises, and fellow-heirs with Christ in glory" (*Larger Catechism*, Question 74).

Surely, we should earnestly crave this great blessing of the Covenant, this "benefit of faith," and not rest till we are assured of its possession.

God makes known to His believers that they are justified. He does so by means of the Holy Spirit and the Scriptures. Romans 8:16: "The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit that we are children of God."

Over against the Roman Church which teaches justification in part by works, the Reformed Churches hold that our good works cannot be our righteousness before God, or some part thereof. And that because of the obvious fact that even our best works in this life are imperfect and polluted with sin. Did not already Isaiah confess long ago, and every regenerated and illumined believer join him in confessing: "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, a polluted garment?" (Isa. 64:8.)

The belief in the non-justifying character of "good works," however, does not mean that the Reformed people deny that God will reward them. Our Lord uttered: "great is your reward in heaven" (Matt. 5:12). Moses "looked unto the recompense of reward" (Heb. 11:26). Only we claim: "this reward is not given of merit, but of grace." Luke 17:10: "Even so ye also, when ye shall have done all things that are commanded you, say: we are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do."

The *origin* of faith is also mentioned in the *Compendium*. "Who worketh that faith in us?" Answer: "the Holy Ghost." Eph. 2:8: "For by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God."

By what *means* this faith is wrought in God's people, is the next inquiry, answered by the statement: "By having the Word preached." That is the ordinary way wherein God does so, but does not exclude other uses of the divine Scriptures in the shape of a christian book, or tract, or song. Can you give examples? But the *usual* method is by preaching. Romans 10:17: "So belief cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ."

That should lead us to appreciate and make use of the ministry of the Word, even as Isaiah, quoted by Paul in Romans 10:15, already exclaimed: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation, that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth" (Isa. 52:7). That truth should also urge us to send out missionaries, as messengers of the Gospel. Romans 10:14: "How shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? and how shall their hear without a preacher?" And how many "mountains" as well as valleys are still untrodden by the feet of those who bring good tidings of peace. Think of it, in our days still two-thirds of the human race unevangelized! Should we, moreover, not covet for ourselves, to become workers in causes of God's Kingdom, at home and abroad, and not simply assist in sending others?

Faith is *strengthened* by the Word preached as well as wrought thereby. The use of the sacraments is also instrumental in this (see Chapter XIX and succeeding Chapters).

May all of us, as "new-born babes," long for the spiritual milk which is without guile, that we may grow thereby unto salvation, as 1 Peter 2:2 exhorts us. For that matter, the Word also contains "solid food" for mature christians (Heb. 5:14). No believer has ever exhausted its wonderful riches of knowledge. May it be our rule to read it regularly, reverently, and prayerfully, but also thankfully, as God's marvelous revelation to our salvation.

QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN WORK

- 1) What is meant by justification?
- 2) Mention its stages or steps.
- 3) What is the instrument of justification?
- 4) What is the ground of justification?
- 5) Describe the first part of justification.
- 6) What is included in remission of sins?
- 7) What is included in adoption?
- 8) Why do not good works merit justification?
- 9) Why should we appreciate the preaching of the Word and how can we show this?
- 10) Why is a missionary appeal comprehended in the instrumentality of the Word preached to originate faith? To what should this lead us?

## CHAPTER XIX.

THE MEANS OF GRACE—THE COVENANT  
OF GRACE

THE previous Chapter closed with mentioning how the Word originates the faith whereby we become partakers of Christ and all his benefits, while both the Word and the Sacraments strengthen it. This leads up to the "Means of grace." By them we understand "the outward and ordinary *means* whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption, his *ordinances*, especially the Word, Sacraments, and Prayer." (*Shorter Catechism*, Question 88.) How the Lord uses *Prayer* to communicate blessings to us, we shall see in Chapter XXVII.

In the Reformed Churches we usually speak of two kinds of means of grace, namely, the Word and the Sacraments, the one appealing to the ear, and the other to the eye. "The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the Word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners, and of building them up in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation." (*Shorter Catechism*, Question 89.) This we already studied in the preceding Chapter.

"The Sacraments become effectual means of salvation, not from any virtue in them, or in him that doth administer them, but only by the blessing of Christ, and the working of his Spirit in them that by faith receive them." (*Shorter Catechism*, Question 91.)

While Word and Sacrament are alike in proclaiming Christ and his benefits, and both must be received in faith, they *differ* in three respects. The Word is indispensable, not so the Sacraments. The Word both originates and strengthens faith; the Sacraments only strengthen it. The Word is to be proclaimed to all; the Sacraments are for the Covenant people of God.

Now, before the Sacraments can be discussed properly,



space should be devoted to the *Covenant* just alluded to, since they are its "signs and seals."

The doctrine of the Covenants was not developed at the time our Confession and Catechism were written—hence only passing mention of it is made in them. But by the time our Liturgy was framed, more insight into this dogma had been obtained. And not alone because of the relation of the Covenant to the Sacraments should it be studied, but also because of its great value for the life of the people of God and their seed.

In the English Bible we find the word "covenant" used nearly 300 times, its Hebrew word being *B'rith*, signifying a league, or agreement, or something prepared or eaten—the latter referring to the meal partaken of by both parties in making their agreement. The Greek word, usually translated covenant, is *Diatheke*, denoting arrangement, agreement. The English word "covenant" literally means "to come together." It has the idea of fellowship in it. The Dutch term, *verbond*, and the German, *Bund*, express the thought of a covenant "binding" its principals.

The first mention of Covenant in the Bible is in Gen. 6:18: "But I will establish my covenant with thee" (Noah). The last time it is used in the Bible is in Heb. 13:20: "Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep with the blood of an eternal covenant, even our Lord Jesus."

The word "Testament" is employed about a dozen times in the New Testament (Authorized Version), as a translation of *Diatheke*, the first in Matt. 26:28: "this is my blood of the New Testament" (R. V., Covenant), and the last in Rev. 11:19: "and there was seen in the temple the ark of his testament," (R. V., Covenant).

We speak of various covenants. In Chapter IV we already named that of *Works*. God established a covenant with Noah (Gen. 6:18), usually called that of *Nature*, because it comprehended the promise of God not again to curse the ground for man's sake, and that of the regular rotation of seed-time and harvest, cold and heat, summer

and winter, day and night (Gen. 8:21, 22). It included the blessings of common grace (Chapter XV).

At Sinai God made a covenant with *Israel* (Ex. 34:10), (see below); with David, to establish his seed forever (Psalm 89:3).

In Reformed theology we speak especially of *two* covenants, that of grace and of redemption.

By the *Covenant of Grace* we understand the gracious agreement between God and his people, whereby God promises them complete salvation in the way of faith. The *Covenant of Redemption* is its eternal basis. That Covenant, sometimes called "Counsel of Peace" (Zech. 6:13), may be defined as the eternal compact of the Godhead regarding the redemption of God's people. In it God the Father ordained the Son to be the Redeemer of his people, demanding of him satisfaction of his divine justice and promising him as a reward, special glory as Mediator. The Holy Spirit is also a party in this Covenant in so far as He took upon himself the application of the redemption merited. Luke 22:29: "I appoint unto you a Kingdom, even as my Father appointed unto me." John 17:6: "I manifested thy name unto the men whom thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them to me." John 6:39: "And this is the will of him that sent me, that of all that which He hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day." Compare Ps. 2:8 and Heb. 12:2. There is a *relation* between this Covenant and the decree of Election (Chapter XVII), the latter determining *who* should be saved, and the former in what *manner* this was to be accomplished. (For details regarding this Covenant, see our *Compendium Explained*, Chapter XIX, §2.)

The Covenant of Grace was formally, that is, in due form, established with Abraham, but revealed immediately after the Fall, in the promise about the Seed of the woman, (Chapter VI). Gen. 3:15: "And I will put enmity between thee (Satan) and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel."

Those *included* in the Covenant of Grace are those who

believe like Abraham, and their seed. Gen. 17:7: "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee." (Gen. 3:15.) Gal. 3:29: "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Compare the parable of the vineyard, Matt. 21:43; Rom. 4:17, the olive tree.)

The *Mediator* and *Surety* of this Covenant of Grace is our Lord Jesus Christ. Heb. 8:6: "He is also the Mediator of a better Covenant." Heb. 7:22: "By so much also Jesus became the Surety of a better Covenant."

The Covenant of Grace is in essence *one* and the same from the beginning of its revelation to the end of time, having the same formula, "I am thy God" (Gen. 17:7 and 2 Cor. 6:16), one Mediator (Acts 4:2); bestowing the same blessings (Acts 15:11), and requiring the same way of acceptance, including the same vineyard and olive tree (Matt. 21:31-41 and Rom. 11:7). (Compare *Compendium Explained*, Chapter XIX, §4.) But it has two *dispensations* or modes of dealing, the Old and New dispensations. The *Old* dispensation extended from Adam to Christ. In it was taken up the Covenant of *Sinai* whose Moral Law was to be "our schoolmaster, (R. V. tutor) to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith," (Gal. 3:24). In the O. T. dispensation God's people were treated as minors, placed under ceremonies and types. The *New* dispensation is from Christ to His Second Coming—the dispensation emphasizing the gospel and its privileges of the true freedom of the Christian believer.

The Covenant of Grace during the New dispensation is often called "*Testament*," as we saw above, to express that God is its gracious Giver, who deals with us as children, and that it required Christ's death to make it of force. Heb. 10:16: "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and upon their minds also I will write them; And their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

As already stated, this Covenant is of great *value* for

the life of God's people and their seed. We ought, therefore, to make sure of it that we accept it penitently and believingly—that is, in the way of Conversion in its two parts—see Chapter XXIV.

Precious *promises* appertain to this Covenant, as named in the "Form of Baptism" of the Reformed Churches, and explained in Chapter XXI.

Be sure to read this Form carefully and prayerfully.

### QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN WORK

- 1) Why is not the doctrine of the Covenants developed in our Confession and Catechism?
- 2) What is the character of God's Covenant with Noah?
- 3) What is the eternal basis of the Covenant of Grace? Give details.
- 4) What do you understand by the Covenant of Grace?
- 5) What does it mean that Christ is its Mediator and Surety?
- 6) Why do we hold to the oneness of the Covenant? Who deny it?
- 7) What is the chief difference between the two dispensations?
- 8) Of what significance and purpose is the Covenant of Sinai?
- 9) Mention what you consider the most precious promise of the Covenant.
- 10) Mention what you consider the chief obligation of the Covenant.

## CHAPTER XX

## THE SACRAMENTS IN GENERAL; BAPTISM

**Q. 51. What are the sacraments?**

**A.** They are holy signs and seals instituted by God, thereby to assure us, that He of grace grants us remission of sins, and life eternal, for the sake of that one sacrifice of Christ finished on the cross.

**Q. 52. How many sacraments hath Christ instituted in the New Testament?**

**A.** Two: holy baptism, and the holy supper.

**Q. 53. Which is the outward sign of baptism?**

**A.** The water, with which we are baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

**Q. 54. What doth that signify and seal?**

**A.** The washing away of sins by the blood and Spirit of Jesus Christ.

**Q. 55. Where hath Christ promised and assured us of this?**

**A.** In the institution of baptism; which is as follows: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not, shall be damned."

**W**E now come to the discussion of the means of grace called: the Sacraments, as *signs* to signify, and as *seals* to confirm, the promise of the Covenant of Grace. From times immemorial when people "covenanted" they used certain ceremonies as outward tokens of their transaction—often times partaking of the same food—hence one of the meanings of *B'rith*, as named in Chapter XIX. Frequently the covenanting parties shared a portion of salt as an emblem of their agreement, hence the term "covenant of salt" in Numbers 18:19 and 2 Chron.



13:5. The name usually given to the signs and seals of the Covenant of Grace, is that of *sacraments*, from a Latin word signifying the oath of a soldier, and a pledge given when a lawsuit was started. It was also employed to translate the word "mystery" of Eph. 5:32. It is more biblical, however, to speak of sacraments as "signs and seals," since this term is employed in Romans 4:11: "And he (Abraham), received the *sign* of circumcision, a *seal* of the righteousness of the faith which he had."

Reformed theologians have spoken of the Covenant of Works (Chapter IV), having a sacrament, namely, the tree of life—compare Gen. 2:9 and 3:22, 24 with Rev. 2:7 and 22:2-14. "The tree of life was the seal of the Covenant of works, because it was the outward sign and seal of that life which was promised in the Covenant, and from which man was excluded on account of sin, and to which he is restored through the second Adam in paradise regained"—(A. A. HODGE.) The Reformed theologian Witsius also named Paradise, the tree of knowledge, and the Sabbath, as sacraments of the Covenant of Works. Of the Covenant of Nature with Noah—see the previous Chapter—the rainbow is the seal (Gen. 9:12, 13). But in this Chapter we concern ourselves in particular with the sacraments of the Covenant of Grace, defined in the *Compendium* as "holy signs and seals instituted by God, thereby to assure us, that He of grace grants us remission of sins, and life eternal, for the sake of the one sacrifice of Christ finished on the cross." They are called "signs" because they visibly signify or picture to the eye, the invisible grace of God promised. And they are called "seals" because they are confirming God's promises or pledges of his grace towards us. At the same time they are from the side of the recipients like badges of discipleship, while the Lord graciously employs them as "means of grace" to communicate his blessings to His people.

During the Old Testament dispensation of the Covenant, two sacraments were instituted—circumcision (Gen. 17:9-11), and the passover (Ex. 12:11). Circumcision was a sign and seal of the Covenant formula or promise: "I will be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee" (Gen.

17:7); and in particular a seal of two covenant blessings, namely, of the righteousness of faith (Rom. 4:11), and of the circumcision of the heart (Deut. 30:6). In other words—the blessings of justification and regeneration—promised from God's side. From the side of the circumcised it signified true conversion in its two parts: repentance (in confession of impurity—the “flesh” to be removed), and faith in submitting to the ordinance, looking forward to reconciliation by the shedding of the blood of the coming Redeemer.

The *passover*, including the roasting and eating of a lamb without blemish, was a *discriminative* ordinance, separating Israel from the rest of mankind; *commemorative*, as to the deliverance from Egypt, and *typical* and *prophetical* of the true Passover Lamb, Christ, 1 Cor. 5:7. Both of these ordinances were *obligatory* (Gen. 17:10; Numbers 9:13).

The New Testament dispensation also has two sacraments, both instituted by Christ, namely, Baptism and Communion (Matt. 28:19 and 1 Cor. 11:23-26); the former taking the place of circumcision (Col. 2:11, 12), and the latter that of the passover (1 Cor. 5:7).

In the remaining part of this Chapter we limit ourselves to a discussion of Baptism.

“*Baptism* is a sacrament, wherein the washing with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, doth signify and seal our ingrafting into Christ, and partaking of the benefits of the Covenant of Grace, and our engagement to be the Lord's.” (*Shorter Catechism*, Question 94); Gal. 3:27; Romans 6:3, 4.

“Baptism is not to be administered to any that are out of the visible Church, till they profess their faith in Christ, and obedience to Him; but the infants of such as are members of the visible Church, are to be baptized” (*Shorter Catechism*, Question 95). (See the next Chapter for Infant Baptism.)

The outward sign of Holy Baptism is the water with which we are baptized, in the Name of the triune God.

It should be observed that “in” here does not merely

signify "by order of." God's Name, as we saw in Chapter VIII, indicates God's very Being. "In" therefore should also be thought of in the sense of "into," that is, to stand in the closest relationship with God, the relation of a life-union—the deepest significance of the Covenant idea. It includes the blessing of removal of sin, which separates us from God by nature in order to form what has been called a "life-union" or living fellowship. Therefore we may indeed say, as the *Compendium* does, that Baptism signifies and seals "the washing away of our sins by the blood and Spirit of Jesus Christ" (Acts 22:16; 1 John 1:7). This was promised and assured in the institution of Baptism, Matt. 28:19: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not, shall be damned."

The *subjects* of Baptism, as already indicated, are believers and their children. This sacrament is administered but once, as the sacrament of the new birth or regeneration, which takes place only once. But the second sacrament, the Lord's Supper, is administered from time to time as the means of grace to nourish the life of regeneration—something needed right along during the believer's pilgrimage from the City of Destruction to the New Jerusalem.

As *mode* of administering Baptism, the Reformed Churches employ sprinkling rather than immersion. While immersion is justified in Scripture, sprinkling is more symbolical of spiritual cleansing (Ez. 36:25, 26), hence it is preferred. (Compare our *Compendium Explained*, Chapter XX, §3.)

Only those who are ordained to the ministry of the Word are authorized to administer Baptism and Communion, because the Lord Jesus in the great Commission joined teaching or preaching with baptizing.

May we often pray for the gracious fulfilling of what Baptism signifies and seals. And may we not forget that this sacrament not alone signifies and seals the Covenant promises of God, but is also expressive of our "engagement to be the Lord's"—as we quoted from Answer 94 of the

*Shorter Catechism.* The Covenant, as we shall see in the next Chapter, "*admonishes* of and *obliges* us unto new obedience!" Let us often plead on the promise of Ez. 36:25 above referred to: "And I will sprinkle clean water upon you and you shall be clean."

### QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN WORK

- 1) What does the word "sacrament" as to its origin, indicate?
- 2) What has been considered a sacrament of the Covenant of Works, and why?
- 3) What is meant by the sacraments as "signs"?
- 4) Why do we call sacraments "seals"?
- 5) What did circumcision signify?
- 6) What can you say of the passover?
- 7) What do we mean by calling these ordinances "obligatory"?
- 8) What does the water of Baptism signify?
- 9) What does it mean: "in" or "into" the Name of the Trinity?
- 10) Why do the Reformed Churches administer Baptism by sprinkling?

## CHAPTER XXI

## INFANT BAPTISM

**Q. 56. Are infants also to be baptized?**

**A. Yes: for they, as well as the adult, are comprehended in the Covenant of God, and in his Church.**

**I**N the definition of Baptism, as quoted from the *Shorter Catechism*, Question 95, it is stated: "But infants of such as are members of the visible Church are to be baptized." That leads us to the very important subject of *Infant Baptism*, named in Question and Answer 56 of the *Compendium*.

We mentioned in the preceding Chapter that Baptism took the place of circumcision. Coll. 2:11, 12: "In whom (Christ), ye were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands, in the putting off of the body of the flesh, in the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with him in baptism."

Circumcision was not laid upon the Gentile Church (Acts 15:28, 29). Paul warned: "If we receive circumcision, Christ will profit you nothing" (Gal. 5:2).

Consequently the Christian Church held from the beginning that the bloody rites of the Old Testament belonging to the Sacraments of the former dispensation, were abolished by the shedding of the blood of Christ.

And just like Communion—see the next Chapter—very naturally took the place of the Old Testament Passover, so Baptism was substituted for Circumcision. And since in the old dispensation the children of believers received a sign and seal to mark their covenant-relationship, so it was considered that this should be the case in the new dispensation of the same Covenant of Grace. That the Covenant was the same during both dispensations, we already showed in Chapter XX.

It is this *covenant-relationship* that is named in our



*Compendium* as the first ground for the baptizing of infants.

It is easy to prove from the Old Testament that the children of believers were in the Covenant and had a right to receive the Sacrament as an initiatory sign and seal of the promises thereof. Gen. 17:7: "And I will establish my Covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee throughout their generation for an everlasting Covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee." Gen. 17:10: "This is my Covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; every male among you shall be circumcised." Gen. 17:12: "And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you."

That children of believers are in the Covenant during the New Testament dispensation is likewise easily proven—hence their privilege to receive a sign and seal as token thereof. Our Lord said repeatedly concerning children: "Theirs is the kingdom," and He blessed them (Mark 10: 14, 16). Peter stated (Acts 2:39): "For to you is the promise, and to your children"—namely, of the remission of sin and the gift of the Holy Spirit, named in the preceding verse. Paul in 1 Cor. 7:14 called the children of believers "holy." He himself baptized not alone the believing Lydia (Acts 16:15), but also "her household," even as he baptized not only the penitent jailor of Philippi, Acts 16: 33, but likewise "all his," while he states in 1 Cor. 1:16: "And I baptized also the *household* of Stephanus."

And no wonder. The covenant of God embraces not alone the individual but also the *family* of the believer, as plainly shown in the Bible. Gen. 12:3 (spoken to Abraham): "And in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Ex. 12:22: "Take you lambs according to your families."

Gal. 3:29: "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise."

The *Compendium* names as a second ground for Infant Baptism that infants are also comprehended in the *Church*. That was true during the Old Testament.

1 Cor. 10:2: "And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." (Ex. 14:16.) Joel 2:16: "Gather the people, sanctify the assembly, assemble the old men, gather the children." And children were likewise included in the New Testament Church. 1 Cor. 7:16: "Else were your children unclean; but now they are holy." Everywhere in the Epistles we find the children named as comprehended in the Church, and hence sharing in its privileges, including Baptism, as evident from the fact that households were baptized when parents believed. Compare Eph. 6:10. And ancient Church History proves plainly the statement of Origin, born in A. D. 185 and himself baptized in infancy: "The Church has received the tradition from the apostles to give Baptism to the little children." (See our *Compendium Explained* for additional grounds, Chapter XXI.)

When the *objection* is raised that children do not *understand* Baptism, we reply: neither did infants realize what circumcision meant. But God commanded it. If it is objected: believing must precede baptizing, we reply: that is true regarding adults coming from paganism. Moreover, we distinguish between belief as an act, and as a latent ability (*vermogen, hebbelijkheid*), and according to Holy Writ this can be present in children—think of Jeremiah and John the Baptist.

If, finally, the objection is made that infant baptism is nowhere commanded, we claim: no specific command was *needed*, because what was commanded to Abraham was plain, and the Lord nowhere told his New Testament Church to cease giving to its seed an outward token of its Covenant relationship.

If the question is asked: what does Baptism *signify* and seal to the children of believers, we answer: That the Triune God is their God and will grant them complete salvation in the way of faith. Gen. 17:7: "To be unto thee a God, and to thy seed after thee." 2 Cor. 6:16: "And I will be their God, and they shall be my people." Therefore Baptism entitles the children of believers to look upon God as their God, and to expect the fulfillment

of His Covenant promises. What those are is beautifully expressed in the "Form of Baptism" of the Reformed Churches. "For when we are baptized in the Name of the Father, God the Father witnesseth and sealeth unto us, that He makes an eternal Covenant of Grace with us, and adopts us to be his children and heirs; and therefore will provide us with every good thing, and avert all evil or turn it to our profit." The Son seals unto us "that He doth wash us in his blood from all our sins, incorporating us into the fellowship of his death and resurrection, so that we are freed from all our sins and accounted righteous before God." And the Holy Spirit assures us "that He will dwell in us, and sanctify us to be members of Christ, applying unto us what we have in Christ."

But, "whereas in all covenants, there are contained two parts, therefore are we by God, through baptism, *admonished* of, and *obliged* unto new obedience, namely, that we cleave to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; that we trust him, and love him with all our hearts, with all our souls, with all our minds, and with all our strength; that we forsake the world, crucify our old nature, and walk in a new and holy life." That includes public confession before the Church when covenant children arrive at years of discretion. May we, to discharge these obligations, often plead upon these promises!

*Parents* also solemnly bind themselves, when their children are baptized, namely, to bring them up in the fear of God and to instruct them and have them instructed in the doctrine of salvation, even as He said unto Abraham, the father of the faithful, Gen. 15:19: "For I have known him to the end that he may command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the ways of Jehovah, to do righteousness and justice." Eph. 6:4: "Ye fathers . . . nurture them in the chastening and admonition of the Lord."

### QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN WORK

- 1) How do you prove that Baptism took the place of Circumcision?
- 2) What do you mean by the Covenant of Grace?

- 3) Prove from the O. T. that children belong to the Covenant.
- 4) Prove from the N. T. that children are comprehended in the Covenant.
- 5) What is the historical incident alluded to in 1 Cor. 10:2, and what does it signify for infant Baptism?
- 6) Prove from the O. T. that children belong to the Church.
- 7) Prove it from the N. T.
- 8) What does Baptism signify and seal to the children of believers?
- 9) What obligations are comprehended in our Baptism?
- 10) To what are parents bound in the Baptism of their children?

## CHAPTER XXII

## THE LORD'S SUPPER—CHURCH DISCIPLINE

- Q. 57.** What is the outward sign in the Lord's supper?
- A.** The broken bread that we eat, and the poured out wine which we drink, in remembrance of the sufferings and death of Christ.
- Q. 58.** What is thereby signified and sealed?
- A.** That Christ, with his crucified body and shed blood, feeds and nourishes our souls to everlasting life.
- Q. 59.** Where hath Christ promised such things to us?
- A.** In the institution of the Lord's supper, which is thus expressed, by St. Paul, 1 Cor. 11:23, 24, 25, 26: "For I have received of the Lord, that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, brake it, and said, take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, this cup is the new testament in my blood; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For so often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come."
- Q. 60.** Is the bread changed into the body of Christ, and the wine into his blood?
- A.** No; no more than the water in baptism is changed into the blood of Christ.
- Q. 61.** After what manner must you examine yourself before you come to the Lord's supper?
- A.** 1. I must examine whether I abhor myself for my sins, and humble myself before God on account of them. 2. Whether I believe and trust that all my sins are forgiven me for Christ's sake. 3. Whether



I also have a sincere resolution henceforward to walk in all good works.

Q. 62. May those be admitted to the Lord's supper, who teach false doctrines, or lead offensive lives?

A. No; lest the covenant of God be profaned, and his wrath kindled against the whole church.

Q. 63. How must we then deal with such persons?

A. According to the appointment given us by Christ, Mat. 18: 15, 16, 17. "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother; but if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established; and if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church; but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."

WE now come to discuss the second New Testament Sacrament, in the *Compendium* called the Lord's Supper. Other names are "Communion" and the "Lord's Table." Roman Catholics speak of it as the "Eucharist," and combine it with the Mass.

Just like water is the element used in Baptism, so in the Lord's Supper the outwards signs are the broken bread and the poured out wine. It is celebrated "in remembrance of the sufferings and death of Christ," but also as a sign and seal of the Covenant of Grace. It signifies and seals as such to the believing partakers "that Christ with his crucified body and shed blood, feeds and nourishes our souls to everlasting life." Just like Baptism is the Sacrament of the New Birth, so Communion is designed to strengthen the spiritual life imparted in regeneration.

That our Lord has promised to feed and nourish our souls to everlasting life is evident from the words of Paul in 1 Cor. 11:23, 24, printed above this Chapter. They are precious words indeed, worthy of careful study. The bread of Communion is *broken*, in the sight of the com-

municants, to signify that Christ's body was "broken" for us, in the sense that his human nature, consisting of body and soul, was separated in death, for the atonement of our sins which had separated us from God. The Reformed Churches use ordinary bread for this purpose. The wine of Communion is *poured out*, as an emblem of the shedding of the blood of Christ. As bread strengthens and as wine cheers, so the combination of both elements indicates a strengthening of our spiritual life to be spent in joyful devotion, in God's service.

The administration of this Sacrament is for the *purpose* of sealing to us the love of God toward his people, to strengthen our faith through communion with our Lord, and to commemorate his death for our redemption.

The 60th question of the "Compendium": "Is the bread *changed* into the body of Christ, and the wine into his blood?" is alluding to the claims of the Roman Church that "the holy Eucharist is the true body and true blood of Jesus Christ, who is really and substantially present under the appearance of bread and wine." It asserts that when the words: "this is my body, this is my blood," are spoken, the bread is, in an invisible way, changed into the body, and the wine into the blood of Christ, so that of the original elements nothing is left but their species or appearance. "Mass" which we named above, is considered to be "the perpetual sacrifice of the New Law, in which Christ offers himself by the hands of the Priest, in an unbloody manner, under the appearance of bread and wine, to his heavenly Father as He once offered himself on the cross in a bloody manner." This is called transubstantiation, a term denoting: "change of substance."

We reject this Roman doctrine on the ground given in the answer to Question 60, that the bread and wine are changed "no more than that the water in baptism is changed into the blood of Christ." (Read Ans. 80 of the Heidelberg Catechism).

Communion is a very solemn New Testament ordinance. It is required of us, to obtain its blessings, that we by faith appropriate Christ to ourselves as He gives himself to us.

It is our *duty* to partake, because Christ commanded his followers: "This do in *remembrance* of me."

For that last named reason we speak of it as a *commemorative* ordinance. It is likewise *witnessing* of our loyalty to Christ, and a *covenanting* ordinance in the sense that it expresses our peculiar relationship to our Lord, our "agreement" with him.

At each Communion celebration we should pledge ourselves anew to be indeed the Lord's, in life and labor.

The Lord's Supper is also designed to express our hearty *union* with God's believing people, as we sit down at the same table and partake of the same consecrated elements.

This all being included, it behooves us, as the "Compendium" states, to "*examine*" ourselves before we come to the Lord's Supper. This examination of ourselves covers *three* important matters. The first is to examine ourselves as to abhorring ourselves for our sins, and humbling ourselves before God on account of them, "considering that the wrath of God against sin is so great, that, rather than it should go unpunished, He hath punished the same in his beloved Son Jesus Christ, with the bitter and shameful death of the cross." (Form of Communion).

The second matter about which we must examine our heart is: whether we believe and trust that all our sins are forgiven us for Christ's sake. In other words, each of the communicants must search himself: "whether he doth believe this faithful *promise* of God, that all his sins are forgiven him, only for the sake of the *passion and death of Jesus Christ*; and that the perfect righteousness of Christ is imputed and freely given to him as his own, yea, so perfectly as if he had satisfied in his own person for all his sins, and fulfilled all righteousness."

The third matter comprehended in this self-examination is: "whether I also have a sincere resolution henceforth to walk in all good works." In other words, the communicant is to "examine his own conscience, whether he purposeth to show true thankfulness to God in his whole life, and to walk uprightly before him; as also, whether he

hath laid aside all enmity, hatred and envy, and doth firmly resolve henceforward to walk in true love and peace with his neighbor." "All those then, who are thus disposed, God will certainly receive in mercy, and count them worthy partakers of the table of his Son Jesus Christ." (Form of Communion.)

In Question 62 we are confronted with the inquiry: "May those be admitted to the Lord's Supper who teach false doctrines or lead offensive lives?" The answer is: "No: lest the Covenant of God be profaned, and his wrath kindled against the whole Church."

That leads to the subject of *Church Discipline*, about which Matt. 18: 15-17 is quoted in the answer to Question 63: "How must we deal with such persons?" We distinguish between *private* and *public* discipline. The first is referred in the first part of the text quoted: "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother; but if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established." In all cases in which sin is of a private nature, this private discipline is required.

The second kind of discipline is called *public*: "and if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church," that is, the officebearers of the congregation, handling the "key of discipline," alluded to in Chapter XVI. Those officebearers are first of all, if the party involved is shown to be guilty, to forbid him to partake of the Sacraments and to abstain from voting at congregational meetings. This is called "*minor excommunication*." But if this also is unheeded, then, after successive "steps" of censure, as provided for in the Church Order or "Book of Discipline," *major excommunication* finally results—described in the closing part of the text quoted above: "But if he neglect the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." (Read for details the "Form of Excommunication" as part of our Liturgy.) Excommunicated persons who show true repentance may be re-admitted to the fel-

lowship of the Church and its privileges. (See the Form for Re-admission in the Liturgy.)

May God enable us to become true partakers of the Sacraments of the Covenant of Grace, walking worthily before God and men.

### QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN WORK

- 1) How many and which names can you mention signifying the Lord's Supper?
- 2) What does Communion signify and seal?
- 3) What is the purpose of Communion?
- 4) Why is it called a commemorative ordinance?
- 5) Why a witnessing ordinance?
- 6) Why a covenanting ordinance?
- 7) What does it express regarding our fellow-communicants?
- 8) What is included in self-examination?
- 9) What is minor-excommunication?
- 10) Which steps are included in major-excommunication?



## THE THIRD PART

### OF THE GRATITUDE WE OWE TO GOD FOR REDEMPTION

#### CHAPTER XXIII

#### GOOD WORKS

- Q. 64. Since we are saved merely of grace through Christ, why must we then yet do good works?
- A. Not to merit heaven thereby (which Christ hath done); but because this is commanded me of God.
- Q. 65. What purpose then do your good works answer?
- A. That I may thereby testify my thankfulness to God for all his benefits, and that He may be glorified by me; and that also I may be assured of the sincerity of my faith, by good works, as the fruits thereof, and that my neighbors may be edified thereby and gained to Christ.
- Q. 66. Shall they also be saved who do no good works?
- A. No: For the Scripture saith, that neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor whoremongers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers, nor such like, shall inherit the kingdom of God, 1 Cor. 6:9-10, unless they turn to the Lord.

WITH the present Chapter the third part of the *Compendium* begins. Its subject is gratitude. And surely as we think of the riches of redemption covered in the second part, and freely bestowed upon man in his misery, as explained in the first part, there are abundant reasons for christian thankfulness.

This gratitude is to be evidenced by means of good works, with which this Chapter concerns itself.

The subject of "good works" was one around which a great deal of controversy centered during Reformation days, when our Reformed standards were written. There

were Anti-nomians, that is, people who declared themselves "against the Law": the meaning of their name. They held that believers were no longer bound by the Old Testament Law given by Moses. That Law had been annulled. Theirs was the "liberty" in Christ. And many sadly and shamefully abused it. Over against them the Reformed Churches maintained the *necessity* of performing good works out of thankfulness.

But the main contention on the subject of Good Works with the Roman Church. In harmony with its Judaistic character, Rome demanded not alone obedience regarding the Ten Commandments of God, the Moral Law, but also with reference to the "Six Commandments of the Church." They were: to hear Mass on Sundays and Holydays; to fast and abstain on the days appointed by the Church; to confess sins at least once a year; to receive worthily the blessed Eucharist at Easter; to contribute to the support of the pastors; and not to marry persons within the forbidden degrees of kindred or otherwise forbidden by the Church—all "strictly binding." Besides this, "processions" and "pilgrimages" and various ceremonies were and are declared: "useful and profitable to us." Good works were said to be necessary to salvation. Through them "the sinner obtains the actual graces which are necessary to his conversion." To this day the Roman Church teaches: "We can apply to others, either to the living or to the dead, the merits of our good works."

No wonder the Reformers protested against all these unbiblical tenets, both of the Anti-nomians and of Rome. They taught, as stated in Question 64, that while those who were saved merely of grace through Christ, should yet do good works, this was "not to merit heaven thereby" (which Christ hath done).

Why, then, were they to be engaged in? Because God commanded them—was the reply, as printed above—a reply brief but to the point, and settling the argument for those who bow before the Word as God's authoritative revelation.

Care was taken to *define* good works. They were "only those which proceed from a true faith; are done accord-

ing to the Law of God and to his glory; and not those which are founded on human institutions or on our own imaginations." Matt. 15:9: "But in vain do they worship me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men."

Some of the good works falling under this head are: meditation, prayer and praise, almsgiving, faithfulness in our daily calling, and hearty consecration.

The *purpose* of these good works is threefold. First, "that I may thereby testify my thankfulness to God for all his benefits, and that He may be glorified by me." Second, "that I also may be assured of the sincerity of my faith by good works as the fruits thereof." Third, "that my neighbors may be edified thereby and gained to Christ."

The Bible furnishes ample proof for the above named threefold purpose of good works.

As to God being glorified—John 15:8: "Herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit."

As to the assurance of the sincerity of our faith: Matt. 7:2: "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them."

As to the edifying and gaining of men for Christ by our good works, we are commanded in Matt. 5:16: "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

The above named refutes at once the charge often made against those who believe in being saved by mere grace, that they are thereby encouraged to lead careless and sinful lives. To bring this feature out the stronger, Question 66 asks: "Shall *they* also be saved who do no good works?" The reply is: "No; For the Scripture saith, that neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor whoremongers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers, nor such like, shall inherit the kingdom of God, unless they turn to the Lord." 1 Cor. 6:9: "Or know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?"

It was on the basis of this that we already learned in the previous Chapter that those were not to be admitted to the Lord's Supper who teach false doctrines or lead offensive lives, but were to be disciplined by the Church.

Ps. 93:5: "Holiness becometh thy house, O Jehovah, forevermore."

Phil. 4:8: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."

There is a *difference* between "living in sin" and "falling into sin." To live in sin denotes that sin is our element in which we delight to live, that we love sin, and will not depart from our ways of iniquity. Such is inconsistent with the possession of true and saving grace. But to "fall into sin" denotes that while we are for the time being overcome by sin, we do not love it, and in God's power repent of it, with sincere repentance, and renewed purposing and endeavor, to walk in newness of life, in due christian gratitude.

This gratitude of the true believer is to be revealed in two ways: in deed and in word. The former is to be evidenced in a life productive of good works, already discussed, as well as in conversion and sanctification, and in obedience to the Law of God, as the next three Chapters discuss; and the latter in prayer, to which the closing Chapter of this book is devoted.

### QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN WORK

- 1) Why should believers be grateful?
- 2) How does Rome show its Judaistic character?
- 3) What unbiblical claims does it make about good works?
- 4) How would you define good works?
- 5) Why should we perform good works?
- 6) How many "good works" and which, can you enumerate?
- 7) Briefly name the purpose of good works.
- 8) Refute the charge that being saved by mere grace encourages careless and sinful lives.
- 9) What is the difference between living in sin and falling into sin?
- 10) What do you consider the chief part of the thankfulness God requires of us?

## CHAPTER XXIV

## CONVERSION

**Q. 67. Wherein doth the conversion of man consist?**

**A. In a hearty repentance, and avoiding of sin, and in an earnest desire after, and doing of all good works.**

**Q. 68. What are good works?**

**A. Only those, which proceed from a true faith are done according to the law of God, and to his glory; and not those, which are founded on human institutions, or on our own imaginations.**

**I**N the previous Chapter we stated that thankfulness should be shown in deeds as well as in words. That leads to the subject of conversion and sanctification. Note well, that these are discussed under the third part of our *Compendium*, about gratitude. That is because it is particularly in them that due gratitude is shown for our redemption—sinful and miserable as we are by nature.

The closing words of Answer 66, printed above the preceding Lesson, were that no fornicators, etc., shall inherit the kingdom, “unless they turn to the Lord.” “Turning to the Lord” is in brief the meaning of conversion. Consequently the question arises “wherein does this conversion or (turning to the Lord) consist?” And the reply is: “In a hearty repentance, and avoiding of sin, and in an earnest desire after, and doing of, all good works.”

To understand this subject aright, we should bear in mind that the same meaning has not always been given to the term “conversion.” Formerly it was understood to include also the development of the spiritual life imparted in regeneration, as this is shown in a life of holiness. This at present is as a rule called sanctification, and Chapter XXV is devoted to it. In our days we usually limit



the meaning of conversion to the first turning from sin, with hearty repentance, and turning to Christ in saving faith. In other words, it includes both: repentance and faith. Mark 1:15: "Repent ye, and believe the gospel."

*Repentance* has been called "a saving grace, whereby a sinner, out of a true sense of his sin, and apprehension of the mercy of God in Christ, doth with grief and hatred of his sin, turn from it unto Christ, with full purpose of and endeavor after, new obedience." (*Shorter Catechism*, Question 87.) Heartfelt sorrow for sin belongs to it, including self-condemnation, as well as turning from it. Job 42:6: "Wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." Acts 2:37, 38: "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter, and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Joel 2:12: "Therefore also now, saith the Lord, Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning." Jer. 3:22: "Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the Lord our God." Ezek. 36:31: "Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities, and for your abominations."

True conversion always includes *faith* as well as repentance. Both are interwoven as it were, as is evident from the very definition of Repentance given above, even as both are coincident. It is faith that "apprehends the mercy of God in Christ." It is faith that is active also in this turning from sin unto Christ. With some the element of repentance is upon the foreground as conversion takes place, and with others faith. Usually the deeper insight there is in the true nature of sin, the better appreciation of God's mercy in Christ will be ours.

We should bear in mind that all this is not realized to its full extent and in every phase, all at once. Usually,

as a christian life, in contact with the Lord and his Word, is led, there is a deepening of convictions regarding the matters named above, as the years go by.

Faith has already been discussed in its bearings in Chapter VII—to which our readers are referred. We, therefore, limit ourselves here to a further discussion of conversion as to its *kinds* and its *necessity*.

There are various *kinds* of conversion. The one we described is conversion “unto life”—as it is sometimes called. It is usually spoken of as *inward* conversion. That name suggests that there is also an *outward* conversion. That last term indicates a change, not of the heart, as the outgrowth of regeneration, but of the outward actions. It has been called a conversion to virtue rather than to God. There is no true sense of sin in it, nor a saving discovery of the Redeemer and his worth. The case of King Ahab, when God’s doom upon his house was pronounced, is a plain instance of outward conversion. “When Ahab heard these words, he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted and lay in sackcloth, and went softly” (1 Kings 21:27). Another instance is Rehoboam who “humbled himself,” while “he set not his heart to seek Jehovah” (2 Chron. 12:12, 14). The case of the Ninevites (Jonah 3:5-10), has been called outward conversion of nationwide scope (*national* conversion). On mission fields *tribal* or *village* conversions take place at times. That does not mean, however, that of necessity each and every person included in this is only outwardly converted.

Inward conversion may be called *legal* or *evangelical* as to its leading features. In a *legal* conversion the law of God in its convicting power is felt particularly, including more or less anguish of spirit. There is often in it considerable fear as to the punishment of sin. In an *evangelical* conversion it is especially the sense of God’s mercy in Christ towards offenders, that stands upon the foreground, and appreciation of precious covenant promises.

We differentiate between *first* and *daily* conversion. The first conversion, described above, in the true believers,

leads to a daily turning from sin, with sorrow of heart, and to the Lord in faith. There is at times in some believers, need of a *repeated* or *second* conversion, as the Lord told Peter: "When once thou hast turned again, establish thy brethren" (Luke 22:32). Compare Jer. 31:19.

Sometimes an entire church needs this. Rev. 2:4, 5: "But I have this against thee, that thou didst leave thy first love. Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent and do the first works."

True conversion, as evident from the last words just quoted, manifests itself in "*works*," in other words, in the "good works" defined in Question 68 printed above this Chapter, and discussed in the previous one. It is, therefore, not something which exclusively affects our soul inwardly, in its three faculties: illumining the mind, changing the affections, and bending the will, but it influences our *life* as well, outwardly—see the next Chapter. Wrought upon by God's grace, the regenerated sinner turns to the Lord in the way of repentance and faith which we described.

Conversion is absolutely *necessary*. Luke 13:3: "Except ye repent, ye shall all in like manner perish." Matt. 18:3: "Verily, I say unto you, Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven."

But, as may be inferred already from what we stated about legal and evangelical modes of conversion, all people are not converted in the same way. We should also bear in mind that while with some, conversion is marked by a definite *crisis* in life, especially with those who walked in ignorance and rebellion, with others it is something less distinctly marked, although the same in its essential elements. The latter is the case often with those who from youth onward walked in ways of the Covenant of grace and were well-instructed in its truths.

May we often pray: "Turn thou me and I shall be turned, for thou art the Lord my God" (Jer. 31:18). Or, in case we have turned sincerely, let us make this known by *confession* before the church, as mentioned in Chapter XXI.

## QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN WORK

- 1) What do we at present understand by conversion?
- 2) What does repentance mean, its first part?
- 3) Prove that faith also belongs to conversion.
- 4) What is outward conversion? Which Bible examples can you name?
- 5) What is meant by legal conversion?
- 6) What is evangelical conversion?
- 7) What is second or repeated conversion?
- 8) Prove the necessity of conversion.
- 9) What is meant by conversion as a crisis?
- 10) How should we make our conversion known and why?

## CHAPTER XXV

## SANCTIFICATION

**Q. 69. Can they, who are converted to God, perfectly keep the law?**

**A. Not at all: but even the most holy men, as long as they are in this life, have only a small beginning of this obedience; yet so, that they with a sincere resolution begin to live not only according to some, but according to all the commandments of God, as they also constantly pray to God that they may daily increase therein.**

**T**HE present Lesson is devoted to Sanctification, whereby we understand "the work of God's free grace whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness" (*Shorter Catechism*, Question 35).

Its relation to conversion, described in the preceding Chapter, is, that while conversion is more or less a marked *crisis* in one's life, sanctification is a *process*, lasting throughout life. Conversion is the active beginning of sanctification, just like regeneration in its turn formed the root of conversion.

Sanctification also stands in relation to *justification*. That, as we stated in Chapter XVIII, signified to *declare* or pronounce "just," in other words, delivering us from the *guilt* of sin, (compare Chapter V, about original sin in its two parts). It pertains to our *state* before God. But sanctification denotes to *make* "just." It delivers from the pollution, the taint or stain, of sin. It relates to our *condition* before God.

There is another difference between justification and sanctification in this respect. In the former we are wholly passive, while in sanctification, like in conversion, we are



active. Still, there is connection between both these blessings, as indeed between the various links of salvation's chain. Romans 8:30: "And whom He foreordained, them He also called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified." In Christ are both justification and sanctification, 1 Cor. 1:30: "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who was made unto us wisdom from God and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption."

Sanctification, in true believers, follows justification, even though Antinomians (Chapter XXIII) deny this. Compare 1 Cor. 6:9-11 and Heb. 12:14.

In sanctification we may speak of two *elements*: "the mortification of the old, and the quickening of the new man" (Heidelberg Catechism, Question 88). Eph. 4:22-24: "That ye put away, as concerning your former manner of life, the old man, that waxeth corrupt after the lusts of deceit, and that ye be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, that after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth."

Mortification of the "old man," that is, our old nature, our "flesh," indicates a dying unto self, the world, and sin. The quickening of the new man, that is, our new spiritual nature, denotes a daily renewing of our life and consecration to God and his service. 2 Cor. 5:15: "That they that live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again." To this quickening belongs: a sincere joy of heart in God, through Christ, and with love and delight to live according to the will of God in all good works" (Heidelberg Catechism, Question 90).

Sanctification is absolutely *necessary*. Heb. 12:14: "Follow after peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord." A great and indispensable *requisite* for sanctification is fellowship with Jesus Christ through faith. John 15:5: "For apart from me can do nothing."

The operations of the indwelling Holy Spirit are likewise factors in sanctification, hence the warnings in the Bible not to grieve the Holy Ghost, as alluded to in Chapter XVII.

Prayerful and faithful use of the means of grace are also to be named in this connection, not alone of the Sacraments, but also of the Word, which we are to "attend . . . . with diligence, preparation and prayer; receive it with faith and love, lay it up in our hearts, and practise it in our lives" (*Shorter Catechism*, Question 90). Nor should we be unmindful of what is included in the "Communion of the saints" (Chapter XVII).

"The benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from . . . . sanctification are, assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost, increase of grace, and *perseverance* therein to the end" (*Shorter Catechism*, Question 36).

The last named phrase leads us to mention the encouraging fact that this sanctification never is entirely lost. The Bible teaches what is called the *Perseverance* of the saints, already alluded to in Chapter XV. 1 Peter 1:5: "Who by the power of God are guarded (kept) through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." Phil. 1:6: "He who began a good work in you, will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ." John 6:39: "And this is the will of him that sent me, that of all that which He hath given me, I should lose nothing."

Isa. 54:10: "For the mountains may depart, and the hills be removed; but my loving-kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall my covenant of peace be removed, saith Jehovah that hath mercy on thee."

This Perseverance is a comforting doctrine, also flowing from that of Election (Chapter XVII), although here, too, we must guard against carelessness and presumption.

But while we, against Arminians and others who teach the possibility of "falling from grace," maintain the persevering of the saints, we do not agree with "Perfectionists" who claim that they who are converted to God are able to keep the Law perfectly. Their fundamental mistake is that they identify the beginning and principle of the mortifying of our old nature, with the complete uprooting of sin. The Reformed Churches confess, as stated in the answer to Question 69, printed above this Chapter:

“even the most holy men, as long as they are in this life, have only a small *beginning* of this obedience.” (See *Compendium Explained*, Chapter XVII, §3, about Perfectionism.)

At the same time the Reformed Churches teach firmly that true believers, “with a sincere resolution *begin to live* not only according to some, but according to all the *commandments* of God, as they also constantly *pray* to God that they may daily increase therein.” About this Law and Prayer, see the next Chapters.

Well may it be our earnest daily petition: that God may give us personally “an inheritance among all them that are sanctified” (Acts 20:32).

### QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN WORK

- 1) What is the relation between conversion and sanctification?
- 2) What is the difference between sanctification and justification?
- 3) What does 1 Cor. 1:30 mean?
- 4) What is meant by mortification of the old man?
- 5) What is the meaning of the quickening of the new man?
- 6) Prove the necessity of sanctification.
- 7) What service do the means of grace render in the process of sanctification?
- 8) Prove the Perseverance of the Saints.
- 9) On what do Perfectionists base their claim and what is their fundamental mistake?
- 10) What should be our great concern about sanctification?

## CHAPTER XXVI

## THE LAW AS RULE OF LIFE

THE Reformed Churches make a twofold use of the Moral Law—the Ten Commandments given by the hands of Moses.

The first use is called *pedagogical*, a term taken from Gal. 3:24, 25, stating that “the Law was a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ.” That is taken in the sense of leading to Christ, which the Moral Law does, as instrument of the Holy Spirit, when it convinces us of sin, and announces the curse, and consequently shows us then that we, to be saved, must make Christ our refuge. This use of the Law is mentioned in the first part of the Heidelberg Catechism and its *Compendium*.

The second use of the Moral Law is called *normative* or regulative, that is, for believers, as their rule and guide for a life of gratitude. A christian is “freed from the law” in the sense that it no longer accuses him in a condemning way, because its demand is fulfilled in Christ, and its curse was carried by our Redeemer. But while the Law is fulfilled, it is not annulled. It is not abolished, but changed in form only. Its essence remains unchanged. This essence, demanding love to God and men, before the Fall was innate in man, and through Christ is restored in the believer, to rule and guide him.

To lay emphasis on the law of Christ “in us,” as some do, is apt to degenerate into false liberty, as seen in the case of Antinomians, already named in Chapter XXIII.

It is this normative use of the Law that is discussed in the third part of the Heidelberg Catechism. It is regrettable that the *Compendium* omits this. Hence this brief exposition of the Law, to make up for the omission.

The Moral Law is *prefaced* by the words: “I am the

LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage," a preface teaching "That because God is the *Lord*, and our God, and Redeemer, therefore we are bound to keep all his commandments" (*Shorter Catechism*, Question 44).

The name of God used therein is his Covenant name—as mentioned in Chapter VIII. The Egypt He delivers from today is Satan's kingdom and sin's bondage—a deliverance which should be a great incentive to law-keeping, out of gratitude.

The *first* commandment is: "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." This prohibits idolatry, in a literal sense, as well as in the sense of relying on any being or thing to the exclusion of God or as his substitute. It, moreover, forbids witchcraft, soothsaying, superstition and invocation of angels or saints. It demands from us to learn to know God aright, to trust in him alone and entirely, to submit to him, accept all good from him and to love, honor and fear him with childlike reverence and willing service. And that at any cost.

The *second* commandment: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image," etc., requires the receiving, observing and keeping pure and entire, all such religious worship and ordinances as God has appointed in his Word. It prohibits worshipping the Lord by images, or in any other way not appointed by him.

There is a *reason* annexed to this command: "for I am the Lord thy God, visiting the iniquity," etc., to teach us God's sovereignty over us, his ownership of us and the zeal He has to his own worship—in punishing offenders, as well as in "showing mercy unto thousands of them that love Me and keep My commandments."

The *third* commandment is: "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord in vain: for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain." God's name may not be used "in vain," that is, lightly, irreverently, or needlessly. Therefore God forbids all profanity, or abuse of anything whereby God makes himself known, with the *reason* annexed, that breakers of the command will be



punished, if not by men, surely by God who will not hold the guilty guiltless. And it commands not simply the holy and reverent use of God's Name, but by inference, likewise of his titles, attributes, ordinances, Word and works. *Lawful* oath-swearing is not forbidden by this if demanded by the proper magistrates or necessity. Needless doing so is contrary to Matt. 5:34-37 and James 5:12.

The *fourth* commandment is: "Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy," etc. This requires "the keeping holy to God such set times as He appointed in his holy Word; expressly one whole day in seven, to be a holy Sabbath to himself. From the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ, God appointed the seventh day of the week to be the weekly Sabbath; and the first day of the week ever since, to continue to the end of the world, which is the christian sabbath" (*Shorter Catechism*, Questions 58 and 59). For the grounds for the last named statement, combatted by "Seventh Day" sects, see *Compendium Explained*, Chapter XXVI. The christian day of rest is "to be sanctified by a holy resting on that day, even from such worldly employments and recreations as are lawful on other days, and spending the whole time in the public and private exercises of God's worship, except so much as is to be taken up in the works of necessity and mercy" (*Shorter Catechism*, Question 60). In the Heidelberg Catechism the maintaining of the ministry of the Gospel and the schools, and the relief of the poor is also named, and rightly so, as comprehended in the fourth commandment. Do you know why?

The command, as it reminds us of "six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work," also demands a life of consecration to one's calling in this world, and forbids not alone the wasting of time, talents and opportunity, but likewise the omission or careless performance of the duties required of us by God, as revealed in his Word and Providence. "The *reasons* annexed to the fourth commandment are God's allowing us six days of the week for our own employments, his challenging a special propriety in the seventh, his own example, and his blessing the sabbath-day" (*Shorter Catechism*, Question 62).

So far the commandments form the *first table* (see Chapter II), covering our obligations to God, gratefully rendered. The next six form those of the *second table*, to be obeyed in a similar spirit, regarding our fellow-beings.

Nearest to us are our parents, hence the *fifth* commandment: "Honor thy father and thy mother." It covers not alone our parents, however, but all who take their place in any way, such as magistrates and teachers. In fact, it has even a wider bearing. The commandment requires to preserve the honor and to perform the duties "belonging to every one in their several places, and relations, as superiors, inferiors, or equals," and forbids "the neglecting of, or doing anything against the honor and duty which belongeth to every one in their several places and relations." "The *reason* annexed to the fifth commandment is a promise of long life and prosperity (as far as it shall serve for God's glory and their own good) to all such as keep this commandment" (*Shorter Catechism*, Questions 64-66).

The brief *sixth* commandment: "Thou shalt not kill," requires all lawful endeavors to preserve our own life and the life of others, and forbids "the taking away of our own life or the life of our neighbor unjustly, or whatsoever tendeth thereunto." Hatred is prohibited here, in thought, as the root of murder (1 John 3:15), but also by gesture, or word or deed. Love to our neighbor, patience, peace-making, meekness, mercy, friendliness in word and deed, are here demanded, even regarding our enemies (Matt. 5:44).

The *seventh* commandment: "Thou shalt not commit adultery," requires the preservation of our own and our neighbor's chastity, in heart, speech, and behavior, and forbids all unchaste thoughts, words, and actions. This condemns immoral literature and shows and pictures, immodest dressing and licentious living, both outside and within wedlock, as well as divorce on unscriptural grounds. Compare Matt. 19:6 and 5:27-32.

The *eighth* commandment: "Thou shalt not steal," forbids "whatsoever doth or may unjustly hinder our own or

our neighbor's wealth or outward estate, and requires the lawful procuring and furthering of the wealth and outward estate of ourselves and others" (*Shorter Catechism*, Questions 74 and 75).

The *ninth* commandment is: "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor." This requires "the maintaining and promoting of truth between man and man, and our own and our neighbor's good name, especially in witness-bearing, forbidding whatsoever is prejudicial to truth or injurious to our own or our neighbor's good name" (*Shorter Catechism*, Questions 77 and 78).

The *tenth* commandment goes deeper than the preceding ones of the second table in its: "Thou shalt not covet." This does not condemn the lawful coveting or desiring of natural blessings, like food and drink, much less spiritual desires after God and his favors; but of all sinful desire, and discontent with our own lot; all envying or grieving at the good of our neighbor, and all inordinate motions and affections to anything that is his. It demands full contentment with our own condition, with a right and charitable frame of spirit toward our neighbor and all that is his" (*Shorter Catechism*, Questions 80 and 81). The Heidelberg Catechism teaches: "That even the smallest inclination or thought, contrary to any of God's commandments, never rise in our hearts; but that at all times we hate all sin with our whole heart, and delight in all righteousness" (Question 113).

Well may we exclaim, especially in view of the tenth commandment: "I have seen an end of all perfection, but thy commandment is exceeding broad" (Ps. 119:96).

We have already learned in the preceding Chapter that they who are converted cannot perfectly keep this law. Even the most holy men, it was stated, have only a small beginning of this obedience. At the same time, as we also learned: "They with a sincere resolution begin to live not only according to some, but according to all the commandments." And that: "not to merit heaven thereby, (which Christ has done), but because it is commanded." Christian gratitude also is of such a nature

that it leads to the prayer from day to day: "O, that my ways were directed to *keep* thy statutes" (Ps. 119:5). May we learn, in that spirit of gratefulness, to say: "Oh, how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day. I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might observe thy Word" (Ps. 119:97, 101).

### QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN WORK

- 1) Which twofold use of the Moral Law do the Reformed Churches hold?
- 2) What does the first commandment forbid?
- 3) What does the second require?
- 4) What does the third commandment forbid? In which ways is it often transgressed in our country?
- 5) Why is the proper sabbath keeping to be insisted on?
- 6) What do the fifth and sixth commandments require?
- 7) What is the chief meaning of the seventh command for the young people of today?
- 8) What is forbidden by the eighth commandment?
- 9) In what ways do we often break the ninth commandment?
- 10) What should be our constant prayer about this rule of gratitude?

## CHAPTER XXVII

## PRAYER IN GENERAL—THE LORD'S PRAYER

Q. 70. To whom must we pray for this?

A. Not to any creature, but to God alone, who can help us, and will hear us for Jesus Christ's sake.

Q. 71. In whose name must we pray to God?

A. Only in the name of Christ, John 16:23, and not in the name of any saints.

Q. 72. What must we pray to God for?

A. For all things necessary for soul and body, which Christ our Lord has comprised in that prayer, He himself has taught us.

Q. 73. What are the words of that prayer?

A. Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.

Q. 74. What do you desire of God in this prayer?

A. 1. That all things which tend to the glory of God, may be promoted and whatsoever is repugnant thereto, or contrary to his will, may be prevented.  
2. That He may provide me with all things necessary for the body, and as to my soul, preserve me from all evil, which might in any wise be detrimental to my salvation. Amen.

**I**N order to begin in this life to properly keep God's holy law out of gratitude, it is needful to employ constantly the chief means of grace, the Word and the Sacraments. But also, what was named already in the opening lines of Chapter XIX: *Prayer*.

That exercise is indeed likewise used and blessed by our gracious Lord to "communicate to us the benefits of



redemption." Prayer is necessary for Christians, because it is "the chief part of thankfulness which God requires of us," as the Heidelberg Catechism teaches, Question 116—a declaration often not sufficiently understood. But it is likewise necessary, as that Catechism also teaches: "because God will give his grace and Holy Spirit to those only who with sincere desires continually ask them of Him and are thankful for them."

True prayer *includes* the offering of reverent petitions to God, accompanied with thanksgiving, confession, and adoration. It must be addressed, as Question 70 of the *Compendium* teaches, "not to any creature but to God alone, who can help us, and will hear us for Jesus Christ's sake." We are to pray "only in the name of Christ," and not in the name of any one else, such as Mary or other so-called "saints" of Roman Catholicism, "The Father, He will give it you in my Name," our Lord told us in John 26:23. Compare Isa. 63:16.

To pray in Christ's "Name" denotes prayer in fellowship with him, and pleading upon his merits. John 15:5: "He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit; for apart from me ye can do nothing." We must pray in Jesus' Name because a holy and righteous God can hear us sinners, only for the sake of Christ and his merits.

The *requisites* of prayer are sincerity, reverence, importunity, submission, and faith.

We need the Holy Spirit to pray properly, "for we know not how to pray as we ought." And the promise is: "but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us" (Romans 8:26).

Prayer is to be offered throughout our life and wherever we be, but especially at stated times in our closet, at family worship, and in the house of God. Luke 18:1: "And he spake a parable unto them to the end that they ought always to pray and not to faint." Eph. 6:18: "Praying at all seasons." That the morning especially is suitable for personal prayers is suggested by Ps. 119:146, 147. About prayers at meals read Matt. 14:19; Acts 27:35; 1 Tim. 4:4, 5.

In Question 72 we are asked what we must pray to God for, and the reply is: "For all things necessary for soul and body, which Christ our Lord has comprised in that prayer He himself has taught us." That prayer is usually named: "The Lord's Prayer," and is printed above this Chapter. What we desire in this is twofold. First, "that all things which tend to the glory of God may be promoted, and whatsoever is repugnant thereto, or contrary to his will, may be prevented." Second, that God may provide me with all things necessary for the body, and as to my soul, preserve me from all evil, which might in any wise be detrimental to my salvation."

This Prayer is called the "perfect prayer" because it comprehends all our real needs, and is a model for all our prayers.

There are in this Prayer six petitions, with a preface and a conclusion, or doxology.

"The *preface* of the Lord's Prayer: 'Our Father which art in heaven,' teaches us to draw near to God with all holy reverence and confidence, as children to a father, able and ready to help us. The use of the pronoun in the plural form, 'our,' suggests and demands that we should pray with and for others, as well as for our own person.

"In the *first* petition: 'Hallowed be thy name,' we pray that God would enable us and others to glorify him in all that whereby He maketh himself known, and that He would dispose all things to his own glory.

"In the *second* petition: 'Thy kingdom come,' we pray that Satan's kingdom may be destroyed and that the kingdom of grace may be advanced, ourselves and others brought into it, and kept in it, and that the kingdom of glory may be hastened. (Compare Chapter XIII about this Kingdom.)

"In the *third* petition: 'Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven,' we pray that God, by his grace, would make us able and willing to know, obey, and submit to his will in all things, as the angels do in heaven.

It has been said: In the first petition of the Lord's Prayer an appeal is made to our *mind*, to know God's Name as the revelation of his Being; in the second the

renewed *affections* of the believer are summoned to serve the Lord in consecration; in the third his *will* is offered in subjection to the Lord. All of this in harmony with the faculties of the human soul, referred to on p. 71.

In the first petition the christian *prophet* speaks, in the second the *king*, in the third the *priest*.

In the first petition we find *faith* leading, in the second *hope*, in the third christian *love*.

The answer to the first petition will impart *wisdom*, the second *righteousness*, and the last one *sanctifies* the heart as a result. (Compare pp. 26, 86, about the image of God and the believer's threefold office.)

"In the *fourth* petition: 'Give us this day our daily bread,' we pray that of God's free gifts we may receive a competent portion of the good things of this life, and enjoy his blessing with them.

"In the *fifth* petition: 'and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors,' we pray that God, for Christ's sake, would freely pardon all our sins, which we are the rather encouraged to ask, because by his grace we are enabled from the heart to forgive others. Matt. 6:14, 15: 'For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your father forgive your trespasses.'

"In the *sixth* petition: 'And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,' we pray that God would either keep us from being tempted to sin, or support and deliver us when we are tempted. (Compare James 1:13, 14.)

"The *conclusion* of the Lord's Prayer: 'For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever, Amen,' teaches us to take our encouragement in prayer from God only, and in our prayers to praise him, ascribing kingdom, power, and glory to him. And in testimony of our desire and assurance to be heard, we say: Amen." (*Shorter Catechism*, Questions 100-107).

1 Chron. 29:10-13: "Wherefore David blessed the Lord before all the congregation: and David said, Blessed be Thou, Lord God of Israel our father, for ever and ever. Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in

the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come of thee, and Thou reignest over all; and in thine hand is power and might; and in thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all. Now, therefore, our God, we thank thee, and praise thy glorious name." Rev. 22:20, 21: "He which testifieth these things said: Surely, I come quickly; Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."

If we pray in this spirit of David and of Revelation, we have assurance that God will hear us, for Jesus said: "Whatsoever you will ask the Father in my Name, He will give it you" (John 16:23), and again: "Ask and it shall be given you, seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you" (Matt. 7:7). Because of this assurance, we conclude our prayers with "Amen," which signifies, "it shall truly and certainly be, for believing prayer is more assuredly heard of God, than I feel in my heart that I desire these things of him" (Heidelberg Catechism, Question 129). Matt. 7:11: "If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven, give good things to them that ask him?"

### QUESTIONS FOR WRITTEN WORK

- 1) Why is Prayer necessary for Christians?
- 2) What should all prayer include?
- 3) What does it mean to pray in Christ's Name?
- 4) Which requisites of prayer can you name?
- 5) What is the work of the Holy Spirit in prayer?
- 6) When are we to pray?
- 7) What does the preface of the Lord's Prayer involve?
- 8) Which petitions are covering the needs of our body?
- 9) Which petitions pertain to our soul?
- 10) What does it mean for each and all of us to pray: "Thy kingdom come"?

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